

**PRESIDENT'S SECRETARIAT  
(LIBRARY)**

Accn. No..... Class No.....

The book should be returned on or before the date last stamped below.





# ARGENTINE TANGO

By the same Author

HISTORY

THE DUKE  
PALMERSTON  
THE SECOND EMPIRE

ESSAYS

BONNET AND SHAWL  
THE MISSING MUSE  
MEN OF LETTERS  
MEN OF AFFAIRS  
MEN OF WAR  
STILL LIFE

CORRESPONDENCE

GLADSTONE AND PALMERSTON

AMERICANA

INDEPENDENCE DAY  
CONQUISTADOR

# ARGENTINE TANGO

PHILIP GUEDALLA

*To the strand of the Daughters of the Sunset,  
The Apple-tree, the singing and the gold.*

HIPPOLYTUS



HODDER AND STOUGHTON  
LIMITED

LONDON

**FIRST PUBLISHED . . . 1932**

*Made and Printed in Great Britain.  
Hazell, Watson & Viney, Ltd., London and Aylesbury.*

*To*

STUART DAVIDSON	ROY FYERS-TURNER
MOSTYN DAVIES	DONALD JUPP
HUGH PUGH	JOHN McGAVIN
PAUL STOBART	PETER REYNOLDS

*and*

E. MILLINGTON-DRAKE



*H*E stopped me just as I was going down the quay to join my ship. Such of my few belongings as were not carried in a spotted handkerchief were in the box upon my shoulder; and my bronzed face and slightly rolling gait proclaimed a sailor to the more observant passers-by. There were not many of them at that early hour. But even if there had been, the massive figure seated on a coil of rope outside the Admiral Benbow would have attracted my attention. An impressive tankard stood at his elbow, and several parrots decorated the outlying portions of his anatomy.

“Avast there,” he observed without more formal preliminaries.

“Belay,” I said mechanically and came to a stand-still in front of him.

He was an enormous man—or would have been if he could ever stand on his feet. But he could not, since one of them was missing, inadequately replaced by the most imposing wooden leg that I have ever seen. Raising the hook in which his right arm appeared to end, he

*fixed me with his sole remaining eye and prepared to speak again. A parrot with previous experience of his conversational manner shifted apprehensively on his shoulder.*

*“Young master,” he began in tones appropriate to giving orders off Cape Horn after the speaking-trumpet has been blown overboard, “whither away? Art bound for the Spice Islands or Nombre Dios or the China Seas or Labrador or Cape Agulhas or the Spanish Main or Trincomalee or the Cays where Henry Morgan——”*

*Interrupting rudely, I broke the chain of his geographical reverie with a brief intimation that I was bound for the River Plate.*

*“Never mind,” resumed my formidable interlocutor. “Wherever ’tis, be warned in time. For wherever ’tis, you will inevitably write a book about it. I sit here on sunny mornings and watch them all go by, bound for the ends of the earth; and they invariably write a book about it.”*

*“Pieces of eight,” one of the parrots on his shoulder remarked irrelevantly (and, I thought, a trifle rudely).*

*“But the warning,” I enquired, “what is the warning?”*

*The old ruffian’s head was nodding in time to his thoughts. “I watch them all go by,” he said, “go down*

*the quay and aboard ship. They all step lightly as they pass, but——”*

*At the price of seeming rude I interrupted him again.*  
*“ The warning,” I demanded sharply.*

*His solitary eye gleamed for an instant ; and all the parrots huddled nervously together in anticipation. It came at last.*

*“ Beware of adjectives,” he roared. “ Beware of adjectives. I always tell them ; but they never listen.”*

*And as I hurried down the quay, his voice still followed me, heavy with warning.*

*We sailed at midnight. The harbour lights grew dim behind us, and a slant of wind brought a faint murmur off the land. “ Beware,” it said, “ of adjectives.”*



## CONTENTS

*[The sections bear the names of tango steps; but I cannot hope that their contents reproduce its grace.—P. G.]*

### *PASEO*

	PAGE
MISNOMER . . . . .	15
BIG BROTHER . . . . .	27
ANGLO-ARGENTINE . . . . .	48

### *MARCHA*

#### WESTERN OCEAN :—

1. SEASCAPE . . . . .	71
2. THE OLD HANDS . . . . .	73
3. EQUATORIAL . . . . .	80
4. BRAZILIAN LANDFALL . . . . .	83
5. MAD METROPOLIS . . . . .	87
6. SHARK . . . . .	95
7. PAULISTA . . . . .	98
8. RIVER PLATE . . . . .	101

#### TRANSANDINE . . . . .

#### ETCHINGS, FIRST STATE :—

1. VISIT OF COURTESY . . . . .	114
2. PAMPERO . . . . .	118
3. CONFERENCIA . . . . .	119
4. RECTOR MAGNIFICUS . . . . .	126

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
<b>ETCHINGS, FIRST STATE (<i>continued</i>) :—</b>	
5. THE EXILE . . . . .	129
6. THE MISSING MOUSTACHE . . . . .	132
7. MAN OF LETTERS . . . . .	136
8. ASADO . . . . .	139
 <b><i>CORTE</i></b>	
GAY CITY . . . . .	147
PARTY-WALL . . . . .	158
FAINT THOUGHTS ON A DISTANT PROS- PECT OF A DICTATOR . . . . .	167
GRAN CAMPEON . . . . .	172
 <b><i>PASEO CON GOLPE</i></b>	
LE DRAPEAU DE LA FRANCE . . . . .	179
 <b><i>TIJERAS</i></b>	
CLIO SUDAMERICANA . . . . .	191
CINCINNATUS IN HAMPSHIRE . . . . .	196
MAD HATTER'S WAR . . . . .	202
THE GOVERNMENT FALLS . . . . .	207
1870 . . . . .	213
 <b><i>RUEDA</i></b>	
FAMILY COACH . . . . .	221
THE DOCTOR'S DILEMMA . . . . .	227
GREAT OPEN SPACES . . . . .	233
 <b><i>EL OCHO</i></b> . . . . .	
	241

*PASEO*



## MISNOMER

THE real attraction, as the big ship slides down Southampton Water and the ranked lodging-houses of the Isle of Wight stand stiffly to attention in a mute farewell, is that you have not got the vaguest notion of what it is that you are going to. Travellers to other destinations have few uncertainties. Bound for New York, the simplest of us knows precisely what he will find at the other end—a jagged skyline, Liberty erect on her pedestal, the Customs shed, black locomotives with cow-catchers, policemen twirling clubs in streets buried far out of sight between towering façades, traffic-signals, obliging darkeys in white jackets, and the familiar *mise en scène* of all the films that we have ever sat through. Rome holds no mysteries for passengers seated in *wagons-lits*, as the Rome express draws out of Paris and the big locomotive gathers speed, headed confidently for the night, Mont Cenis, and Modane. Even the

## ARGENTINE TANGO

East is still the unchanging East of all the folders we have ever read in shipping offices—Constantinople with its line of mosques, great stone bubbles on the sky flanked by the tall spears of Islam, or Port Said in sunshine, shaded decks slipping between the brown banks of the Canal, and a decorous arrival in Bombay anticipated in a score of opening chapters and a league of films of incoming Viceroys. Europe, Asia, Africa, and North America have yielded all their mystery, and any traveller who takes the trouble may know exactly what he is going to. But South America? As the chalk cliffs drop astern and the Channel opens out before him, who knows what he will find in South America? That is the real attraction.

For it must be confessed that earlier travellers have done extremely little to satisfy our curiosity. Not that the Muses have neglected it, since the sub-continent is deeply penetrated by Mr. Tomlinson's richly adjectival tideway; and those enigmatic shores are washed by the waters of *Nostromo*, where the Isabels are mirrored in the tideless sea of Mr. Conrad's prose and the stormy

## PASEO

denizens of Costaguana display a creditable knowledge of conversational Spanish. Yet in the last analysis how much remains beyond a general impression of a sub-continent that is extremely roomy and maintains a population of minor characters with an exasperating tendency to improve all occasions with a sententious murmur of "*¿Quién sabe?*" A stevedore may be a more promising figure of romance, if we agree to call him Capataz de Cargadores ; and any street would gain in dignity from a profusion of pulperías kept by posaderos for the entertainment of peons, whose burros whisk a drowsy tail in the sunshine of the plaza. But, however improving to our modern languages, such glimpses (like the livelier revelations of O. Henry) tell us extremely little about South America. Bathed in its literature, we emerge from our ablutions dripping with odds and ends of Spanish (a language, it would seem, containing far more nouns than verbs) and very little wiser than before. A rich feast of English prose is spread in our sight ; but we rise from Mr. Hudson's with a vague notion that the whole sub-continent is one vast bird sanctuary,

## ARGENTINE TANGO

and from Mr. Cunningham Graham's with a livelier sense of an immense circus where Conquistadores, invariably well-connected, perform feats of doubtful equitation. That forms a meagre equipment for any traveller. But however hard he tries, his education will remain sadly neglected and he will not advance far beyond his first (and wholly inexact) impressions of the South American scene drawn from contemporary writers—white teeth, dark skins, the sudden shot, the point of honour, and a complicated libretto of operatic politics diversified by tropical diseases and exciting lepidoptera.

For the Muses, prodigal of the small change of local colour, have somehow failed to hold the mirror up to South America. Perhaps the mirror was too small. Perhaps the sitter would not stay still long enough to have her portrait taken. Or possibly the Muses were exhausted by the first splendid effort which inspired Hakluyt's traveller to his tale of “another rich nation, that sprinkled their bodies with the poulder of golde, and seemed to be guilt, and farre beyond them a great towne called El Dorado.” That strikes the au-

## PASEO

thentic note of South American travel ; and the note holds as clearly now as when it sounded on the ear of Sir Robert Duddeley, safe home in 1595 from the shoals called Abreojos and the isle of Bermuda, “ and farre beyond them a great towne called El Dorado.” That fairyland is still our goal, as the ship begins to lift a little to the Channel and the last gulls wheel home for England. For however industriously we stuff ourselves with Consular reports and figures about acreages under wheat or mileages of tram-lines or cubic feet of gas supplied to happy townspeople or metric tons of cereals spouted from elevators into the waiting grain-ships, we are bound far beyond them all for “ a great towne called El Dorado.”

Unhappily the modern dialect of El Dorado is a shade restricted. For it is mostly to be found in those secluded pages of the morning paper which come after all the rest and are most frequently (and sometimes a little prematurely) abstracted for household purposes. Happy the continent whose history is written in the City Column. But less happy its historian, since he will find considerable difficulty in assembling his material.

## ARGENTINE TANGO

Brief but authoritative (since the notice convening the annual general meeting has been read by the Secretary and the chair duly taken by the Chairman), such statements paint a meagre portrait. For the Muse of Throgmorton Street is a trifle stiff in the joints, and her picture of South America is almost as inadequate as those drawn by the more accomplished hands of literary gentlemen. Indeed, it leaves one with a bewildered notion that the Company's property is exceptionally rich in quebracho and quinine, with copper somewhere in the offing and a good time coming when the long-standing controversy with the State of Santa Olalla about land-purchase is finally adjusted by the new administration. The population, it would seem, consists exclusively of local boards and labour supply, whose combined efforts produce something normally described as progress. But that will hardly do for a really comprehensive portrait of a whole sub-continent.

Despair begins to settle on the student. Will he never find a satisfactory rendering of this elusive region? Its bibliography is highly impressive; and it would ill-become the writer

## PASEO

of these scattered notes to reproach his more systematic predecessors. For devoted men have ploughed the seas and scaled the peaks ; eager hands compile statistics in illustrated brochures ; and the deep silence of provincial archives is broken by the scrape of learned pens. Have we not the life-work of Professor X., "that learned and painefull writer" (in Hakluyt's incomparable phrase) ? Has not the intrepid Y., whose *Scrambles in the Higher Andes* are a sheer delight, revealed that "on reaching Camp 18 a scene beyond description lay before us" ? Yet somehow South America fails to emerge ; and as the little waves slip by, we have not the vaguest notion of what we are going to.

One formula persists, from which it might be possible to risk a guess about our destination. For writers, especially French writers, have an agreeable tendency to call it Latin America. What they mean is not altogether clear, since no dictionary contains a really satisfactory inventory of Latin qualities. They are, it would appear, the common denominator of Virgil and the Moulin Rouge ; and experts can detect their

## ARGENTINE TANGO

presence equally in Danton and Mussolini. There may be such things. But to disrespectful eyes it would appear that when Frenchmen want anything to which they have no right, they generally call it Latin. For it is sometimes useful to claim relationship even with poor relations, especially when they have a pedigree. Gaul, if the truth must be confessed, was a shade provincial ; but the Latin pedigree is noble and distinct, striding across the ages like a Roman road striding across the subject hills. Such an affiliation serves to align a hard-mouthing Consul of the First Republic with emperors and popes. There is room amongst its varied styles for trim Horatian odes and Ciceronian periods and the grave processes of Thomist logic ; and Rome breathes through it in prose, in verse, in bronze and marble, in law and government. Small wonder enterprising Frenchmen were quick to claim relationship. For a set of ancestors like that was plainly worth a good price at auction ; and the legend of a Latin culture, of a tradition that was somehow common to Italy and France, was good for prestige. Perhaps it was the truth. At any rate, it was ex-

## PASEO

tremely gratifying. Besides, it enabled one to confer patents of nobility on likely *protégés* by discovering that they were Latin too.

And that was how the great misnomer of Latin America came into being. For it was exquisitely tempting to extend a gracious hand towards a modest young sub-continent and call it Latin. What gesture could have been more charming on the part of an established, elder nation than this sudden avowal of kinship ? It was so winning and, without a touch of condescension, so good for trade ; and eager lecturers from the Sorbonne were a charming sight to see, as they deliberately crossed the broad thoroughfare of the Western Ocean to lift a courtly hat and greet a younger sister in the great family of Rome. But how much had Rome to say to the formation of South America ? How far was the strange edifice of South American affairs raised on the foursquare foundation of Latin logic ? At any rate, there were few Frenchmen among its builders. (The long breakwater of Cherbourg recedes, and the hills of Normandy steal back into the dusk behind us.) Other republics owe their outline to the

## ARGENTINE TANGO

Republic One and Indivisible. But no student of the Revolution would ever recognise its handi-work in Argentina or the United States of Brazil. Besides, the main ingredients in the strange brew of South America were fixed long before tricolours ever fluttered or there were such things as republican ideals. For two centuries of younger sons had banged Castilian doors behind them, turned their broad, unsympathetic backs upon ancestral mansions, and drawn deeper breath under the bright skies of America. Spain poured her manliest elements across the Atlantic ; and it is undeniable, since nations cannot escape their ancestry, that the grandmother of South America is Spain.

How much had Rome to say to that ? There are few things in the world less Roman than the mind of Spain ; and that queer blend of Moor, Basque, Catalan, and Visigoth was the mixed crew of South America's *Mayflower*. Are we not headed, outward bound, past the big shoulder of Spain, past the green hills above Corunna, past all the little ports that the Conquistadores sailed from with the big lanterns bobbing on their poops

## PASEO

and their Faith gleaming brightier than their body-armour ? For it was Spain that sent them out ; Spain followed them to Santa Maria de Buenos Aires, and Portugal was still with them at Bahia de São Salvador de todos os Santos. What trace was there of Rome, of the great litany of Latin culture ? Rome's eagles ceased to flap above them long before Lisbon faded away into the haze, since Latin qualities are rare enough along the Tagus. If they had started from French ports or from the coast of Italy, one might have looked for something at their journey's end that could conceivably be Latin. But Rome is very distant from the Moorish alleys of the little ports of Spain and still farther from the broad estuaries of vast American rivers. Latin America, then, is a chimera. The tram-like rails of Latin logic do not run beneath the Equator. There is, of course, a vast inheritance from Europe ; but it is traceable to the true ancestors of South America —to Spain, to Portugal, and to the strange blend of races which fought, built, painted, and ennobled the Peninsula in the four centuries that separate the Cid from Boabdil. For as our ship

## ARGENTINE TANGO

creeps quietly across the map until the voices of distracted European statesmen dwindle to a gnat-like buzz in the summer haze behind us, Europe still reaches after us with her last promontory. But the watchers on the point are anything but Latins, since Portugal and Spain still keep the gate that opens on the West.

## BIG BROTHER

OF all the perils by which writers on travel are beset—anacondas, tidal waves, yellow fever, act of God and the King's enemies—there is not the slightest doubt that adjectives are by far the worst. Not even excluding amateur photography. (And here let me observe that amateur photography runs a good second to any other scourge of humanity. I am not concerned for the moment with its capacity for converting any happy human gathering into a huddled and self-conscious group. But travellers should be warned in time against its magic aptitude for reducing any memorable scene into its own dismal shorthand. Under the camera the sudden splendour of an Algerian oasis—the shrill green of desert cultivation and the deep shade of little walks that wind among the trees—becomes a ragged palm against a bleary sky ; for Torquay and Beni Ounif de Figuig are all one to its undiscriminating eye. Show it a wave, a rock, a

## ARGENTINE TANGO

group of trees, and it will give you back trees, rock, and wave reduced by science to their lowest common denominator, neatly deprived of anything that made them memorable. That is why the destruction of his camera is the best accident that can happen to any traveller. For all his grand descriptions vanish, as we turn the page and come upon that dismal little illustration—the drab rectangle of contrasted greys indifferently labelled *Sunshine at Santos* or *Ethel preparing dinner*, which effectively destroys his finest dithyrambic prose. If he cannot trust his memory, let him by all means make notes *en route*. But his notes, whether made on backs of envelopes or little squares of celluloid, are quite unsuitable for publication. Let him remember that and spare us all the disillusion that resides in those masses of bleared vegetation seen across immense, uninteresting foregrounds. For no words on any title-page can strike a deeper chill than the ominous expression *With fifty-seven illustrations from photographs by the author.*)

But the worst peril of them all is adjectival. Each continent, of course, lures writers to their

## PASEO

doom with its own peculiar adjectives. Simple-minded travellers adrift in Gloucestershire founder upon 'old-world'; all points east of the Balkans are 'timeless'; and what *clichés* of desiccation haunt the empty spaces of Arabia, where the frequent passage of intrepid men begins to create a traffic problem for one another and lonely Bedouin demand a one-way desert. But even if the rocks of commonplace are avoided, there is danger on the open seas of adjectives. How many travellers return from the most fascinating scenes with nothing more to show than a meaningless assortment of epithets. One almost prefers the austere variety whose normal cargo is a sheet of cranial measurements, two meteorites, and a case of forbidding specimens consigned to the Museum of Practical Geology. For adjectives are a poor present to bring home. Seafaring men, who used to dazzle their sweethearts with a pair of monkeys and a parrot, brought home better evidence of what they had seen. Besides, they often had a pocketful of doubloons. But of what use to anyone is a pocketful of adjectives?

## ARGENTINE TANGO

Flabby adjectival writing is the traveller's worst danger. It is so easy, as you lean over the ship's rail, to jot down the fact that palms are green, waves blue (until they break along the curving beaches), and the Pão de Assucar a vivid grey. But the statement means precisely nothing, until you have combined grey, blue, and green upon your canvas into the blinding panorama of Rio—and unaided adjectives will never do it. Adjectives, indeed, are the worst snare in South America. Brave men who penetrate the upper reaches of the Amazon see their best sentences die away, throttled in the strong, prehensile grasp of adjectival undergrowth ; the Pampa remains largely undescribed, because a free use of the epithet ' flat ' fails, even in repetition, to render it ; and as for the Andes—who could ever hope to trace a line of peaks along the upper sky merely by murmuring at intervals that they were extremely high ?

Inadequate for any of its features, adjectives are no less misleading when applied to the sub-continent as a whole. For it eludes them with consummate agility. Light-hearted visitors who

## PASEO

label it 'Spanish America' stand by with rueful faces, as three-sevenths of its total area turn out to be Portuguese ; and the gay nondescript refutes with equal emphasis the grave misnomer of 'Latin America.' For, dubiously Latin, it is as doubtfully American—American, that is to say, in any sense in which the word is used in England. Frequent on British lips, that epithet relates to cigarettes, slang, business methods, rocking-chairs, and novels which originate exclusively in the United States. The American continent may run in magnificent disorder from Cape Horn to Baffin Bay. But by some limitation of the British intelligence the term 'American' is always confined to things and people domiciled in the United States. Canada knows better ; and the South is at some pains to differentiate the *Norteamericano* (not to say *Yanqui*). But Englishmen will always know precisely what they mean, when they call anything—or anybody—American. And what they mean will be the gleam of Stars, the glow of Stripes, a mournful clangour of bells behind the cow-catchers of big, black locomotives, with mechanics who wear striped overalls with

## ARGENTINE TANGO

horn-rimmed spectacles and eat indifferent cigars, producers bawling at blondes beyond belief in Kleig-lit studios, the tap of Thompson sub-machine-guns, bond salesmen in derby hats confronting crossword-puzzles on the carved Renaissance thrones of hotel lobbies, clubmen mysteriously slain in tuxedos, the music of ten thousand tickers where Wall Street soars towards the lucid sky, and Manhattan whispering from her towers the last enchantments of the Middle West. That is what Englishmen are thinking of when they call anything American ; and South America is anything but that.

Few things, indeed, could be more erroneous than to regard it as a southward extension of the America with which films and stock markets have made most Englishmen familiar. For Argentina is not a Spanish-speaking Illinois, nor Buenos Aires a brunette Chicago. We might have been forgiven for thinking so, if our reading was confined to the rare eloquence of speakers at Pan-American Congresses, where perorations swoop from pole to pole with one eye on the future of mankind and one, more watchful, on the State

## PASEO

Department. But Pan-American ideals are no more immediate than Pan-Asiatic or Pan-European. (There is something touching in the way that politicians, after failing to unite a single country, take frequent refuge in the grandiose ambition to combine a continent.) Indeed, if the extent of territory covered is any guide, Pan-America will take precisely twice as long to realise as the United States of Europe. For that agreeable chimera contemplates a mere union of the Urals with the Pas de Calais—a trifling business in which our sole concern is with a single continent, "*l'affaire*" (as Napoleon remarked of Waterloo before the battle) "*d'un déjeuner*." But Pan-America's sublime objective is a *Pax Americana* reigning from Cape Horn to Alaska—or rather, from Alaska to Cape Horn, since if there is any reigning to be done, it will occur north of the Rio Grande. A citizen of that Utopia could walk from Minneapolis to Valparaiso (leaping the Panama Canal) without a change of jurisdiction. But his walk (unlike the United European's, as he strolled from Lille to Nijni Novgorod) would take him through two continents.

## ARGENTINE TANGO

That is the cruel truth that lies concealed behind the splendid name, America. For, masquerading as a single continent, it happens to be two ; and what is more, they are as different from one another as Europe and Asia.

More factors than geography and climate keep them apart. Race, economics, and religion have conspired to differentiate North from South America ; and not all the perorations in the world are ever likely to unite them. For what have they in common beyond a name inherited by both continents from an explorer who discovered neither ? Their moods are widely different ; their ideals appear to run in opposite directions ; and the looks that they exchange are rarely seen in lovers' eyes. For it can hardly be denied that South America views her northern neighbour with something bordering on apprehension, sharing the ancient view that “ all evill commeth from the North.” It is not for a mere European to appraise the reality (or otherwise) of the menace ; but it is not, one feels, for nothing that the ‘ *Peligro Yanqui* ’ is a commonplace of South American publicists.

## PASEO

One rueful Northerner confesses that "the United States is known in Latin America chiefly by its movies, its jazz, and other aspects of its life which do not add to its prestige. Personal contacts are made chiefly by salesmen who frequently leave a bad impression as to our education and ideas." Can it be that South American misgivings are solely due to Harold Lloyd, the rhythm of the blues, and the defects of Babbitt as a conversationalist? I doubt it. For Europe is almost equally pervaded by obliging gentlemen with samples, by the disharmonic wails of dance music from Alabama, by the vast grimace of Hollywood ; but there is nothing in the European mind comparable to the shrinking of South America from the '*Peligro Yanqui*.' What is the reason? Such apprehension cannot, I think, have been inspired by jazz. Those tinny rhythms have no power to prevail against the lift and march of Argentina's tango or the dancing gaiety of the Brazilian maxixe ; and South America is proudly conscious that her independence is not threatened from that quarter. Salesmanship never alarmed a nation, since a threat of com-

## ARGENTINE TANGO

mercial domination is just something to be dealt with by competition or tariffs. Besides, the mood of South America is scarcely one of mere apprehension, since it is occasionally tinged with resentment. Now one may dislike bad music or bad taste ; one may feel a vague concern about aggressive foreign commerce ; but one does not resent them. The one thing in the world that universally inspires resentment is a claim, spoken or unspoken, of superiority ; and South America is acutely sensitive to such a claim on the part of the United States.

That is the root of all the trouble. For the United States, sublimely aware of their pre-eminence in the Western Hemisphere, have not hesitated to impart that information to neighbours who did not require it. In the first place, of course, the Anglo-Saxon attitude was to blame. What Anglo-Saxon can resist the certainty that he is raised above mankind by something that he cannot quite express ? (For your true Anglo-Saxon is nothing if not inarticulate : the vulgar business of expression may be left to lesser breeds.) Having attained this certainty, he is impelled by

## PASEO

an exacting sense of truth to publish his results and make the world aware of his superiority. The world frequently dissents ; but since the Anglo-Saxon makes a point of knowing no languages except his own, its dissent is wasted on him. Indeed, he often takes the gnashing of its teeth for an admission of inferiority. One further (and delightful) feature marked the case of the United States : by a delicious irony the less Anglo-Saxon they became, the more they were convinced of their own superiority.

Such a conviction tends to irritate the neighbours ; and since Uncle Sam made no secret of it, the neighbours were duly irritated. Besides, his lamentable sense of superiority was fed from a second source. There is nothing in the world that puts a man above himself like seniority. The bare fact of priority in time renders club-members —to say nothing of relations—quite intolerable. That smoking-room, they seem to say, was theirs before the latest member of the club was born or thought of ; the waiters knew their preferences whilst a fellow-member was absorbing tapioca under feminine persuasion. Their gait proclaims

## ARGENTINE TANGO

it ; and no information is less welcome to its young recipients, since we all dislike to be reminded that we rank behind anyone. That certainty as well endangered Uncle Sam as a candidate for popularity on the American continent. For he was palpably the oldest member. His entrance fee was paid when he joined the society of free nations (with some assistance from King George III) in distant days when royal Viceroys corresponded in grave, official Spanish from New Granada to Tierra del Fuego. For nearly half a century his proud position was maintained as the one freeman in a continent of colonists ; and it was small wonder he looked down his independent nose at his more docile neighbours. Then the contagion of liberty took the whole continent. Dawn after dawn of freedom flamed in the southern sky ; there was a galaxy of Liberators ; Wars of Independence became things of annual occurrence ; and the United States, no longer isolated in their freedom, found themselves quite commonplace residents in a community of republics. The club was growing now ; new faces looked round magazines, and strange voices ordered light re-

## PASEO

freshments ; but it was a consolation to remind new members that there was someone in the smoking-room whose seniority was quite undoubted.

Something of that mood speaks in the proud cadences of the Monroe Doctrine. For President Monroe informed the European Powers that he owed it “ to candor and to the amicable relations existing between the United States and those Powers to declare that we should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety.” Historians may debate the President’s precise intentions ; and the practical utility of his pronouncement is distinctly questionable, since the new liberties of South America were threatened by the armed forces of Spain and France, and an ugly look from President Monroe in 1823 would not have kept many French or Spanish troopships out of the River Plate. In harsh reality Mr. Canning’s cruisers were the shield behind which the young republics grew. But the deep echoes of the Monroe Doctrine reverberated gravely ; and its assumption

## ARGENTINE TANGO

of trusteeship served to show which way the wind was blowing between Washington and Buenos Aires. For there was a touch of condescension in its implications. The United States had intervened in the debate between Spain and her colonies with a plain intimation that Europe would not be permitted to prevail because the United States were constituted in some mysterious way the guardian of free republics on the whole American continent. By whose appointment they filled this honourable post was slightly obscure, since there was no evidence that anyone had asked for their protection or that they could have given any. But what was plain was the resounding fact that President Monroe cast the United States for the commanding rôle of guardian ; and since guardians can hardly function without wards, his Doctrine contemplated that the pretty part of helpless infants would be played by the young republics of the South.

That is the misreading of the facts which South America can never pardon ; and there is something in its deliberate condescension which most nations would resent. The facts, in-

## PASEO

deed, entirely failed to justify it. For the War of Southern Independence moved to its appointed end. Europe did not prevail ; the beaten Spanish armies left behind them a galaxy of young republics ; the cheerful wards obtained their victory without assistance from their self-appointed guardian ; and President Monroe was not justified of his children, since they had obstinately refused to be children and proved themselves to be grown men. That was the answer to his claim ; and that, one might have thought, would have disposed of his Doctrine. But by some perversity of the New England mind it has survived to set the tone of international relations between the United States and South America with its eternal and disastrous assumption of superiority. The young republics of the South grew steadily to fuller manhood ; but, bravely undeterred by all the facts, the solemn periods of the Monroe Doctrine continued to announce to a politely interested Europe that the shrinking form of Argentina, the infant footsteps of Brazil would be protected by the United States from its encroaching grasp. Since

## ARGENTINE TANGO

few Europeans in the wildest dementia of imperialism contemplate a conquest of Peru, the announcement was of slight importance to its recipients. But it was of growing interest to an exasperated audience in South America, where the news that Rio might sleep in peace among its mountains, watched over by West Point, somehow failed to command Brazilian gratitude. There were no cheers in Buenos Aires for the name of President Monroe. For as an instrument of international good-will his Doctrine committed the cardinal blunder of belittling those for whose benefit it was designed ; since there is nothing more annoying to grown men than a standing offer of a ride in a perambulator.

It was just that bland assumption of seniority which rendered the Monroe Doctrine increasingly distasteful to its beneficiaries in South America—of seniority and, if the truth must be confessed, of something more. If the United States have always been convinced that South American republics were not quite grown up, it was not altogether clear to the American intelligence that if they managed to grow up, the results

## PASEO

would be wholly satisfactory. For the self-esteem of Washington, as it gazed south across the Rio Grande, was founded upon two convictions : that it was older than its Spanish neighbours, and that its own moral qualities were on a distinctly higher level. (The attitude is not unfamiliar in the case of elder brothers, since the Prodigal Son had one who suffered from the same delusion). That hallucination seems to underlie the whole attitude of the United States to South America in all its manifestations ; and South America, which might have pardoned the *Yanqui* tendency to treat her as a child, cannot forgive the graver error which regards her as a backward, a distinctly naughty child. Yet North American acumen is constantly betrayed into that blunder. For when the Spanish-American makes his appearances in North American art or fiction, he enters with a bow, a sweeping cloak, a slightly excessive hat, a flashing smile, a touch of perfume, and a wicked air—in fine, the ‘bad man’ from Mexico. He may set hearts fluttering ; but he is ultimately foiled by a more unassuming blond. All the mis-

## ARGENTINE TANGO

givings with which fair-haired races regard the sleek heads of their darker neighbours are heaped upon him ; and the most that any author will concede to him is that he has admirable manners. But however low he sweeps his hat, however gallantly his spurs may jingle, the audience retains its grave doubts as to his moral qualities. For he remains eternally the 'bad man' from Mexico. Are there, one is inclined to ask, no 'bad men' from Kansas City ? Is life in Chicago a tedious procession of civic virtue ? Are there no villains in Dubuque ? This dependence on foreign sources of supply for wickedness is surely morbid ; and, what is more, it has definitely warped the whole country's view of South America. For the New Yorker, as he sits beneath his Tammany vine, regards the citizen of Buenos Aires as a helpless victim of unnameable corruption ; fresh from a political Convention, with the ballyhoo still ringing in his ears and a vivid memory of its deliberations punctuated by brass bands and the timely interventions of vaudeville stars, he views Southern politics indulgently as a mere comic opera.

## PASEO

That is the fundamental error of the United States about their Spanish-speaking neighbours. For they have failed to catch the high gravity of Spain, the solemn eloquence that loves to theorise interminably as *Don José* theorised in *Doña Emilia's* drawing-room, where Joseph Conrad caught more of the mood of South American politics than is imprisoned in all the papers of all the research students that ever sailed from New England ports for South America. It was so tempting to regard the actors on that lively stage as merely voluble and picturesque. They were voluble, of course, because an animated language moves swiftlier than the *staccato* interchange of grunts which Anglo-Saxons mistake for conversation. And they were picturesque ; for who could fail to be upon a sunlit scene between those mountains and that sea ? But South America was not, was never wholly made up of colour and animation. Had it been, it would matter no more in the world than Haiti. The sub-continent has seen the slow effort of the Spaniard and the Portuguese at war with tropical disease, with Indians, with

## ARGENTINE TANGO

the vast mileage of those stupendous distances ; villages grew into cities, and cities spread along their gleaming water-fronts ; great rivers became highways, and men, like a family of ants, crept endlessly across the plains, the never-ending plains, until the mountains climbed slowly up the sky before them, and they braved the mountains and came down upon the steep slopes of the further side and heard the waves along Pacific beaches. That is the history of South America—no gay scenario of comic Presidents succeeding one another in a harmless rattle of revolutions, but the slow grinding of vast gates that open on a continent. It is so easy to miss its grave significance in the comic business of current politics—so easy and so flattering. For what experience can be more flattering to citizens of other countries than to look on indulgently while Costaguana persecutes her latest President ? It helps them to forget their own defects in the contemplation of someone else's imperfections, to drown the shooting in their streets with Caribbean fusillades. It helps them, above all, to taste the deep security of greater

## PASEO

age, to feel themselves a grave community of elder brothers, looking down with kind, indulgent eyes upon the antics of the nursery. That is the source of almost every error in the attitude of the United States towards South America ; and error will persist until the Big Brother complex is resolved.

## ANGLO-ARGENTINE

*Enter the Prince attended.—SHAKESPEARE*

### I

ALL day long they had been coming up the River Plate, that great yellow plain of waters which lies between the plains of Uruguay and the never-ending Pampa of the Argentine that ran five hundred miles clear to the west of them until it met the Andes. The dead level of the skyline was quite unbroken except at intervals by the rare interruption of a group of trees round some estancia. There had been nothing in the world for them to look at since they left the little hill of Montevideo behind them at breakfast-time. They were nearly three weeks out from England now ; but they were still at sea, although the land was near. Indeed, from what they saw of it they were inclined to think that they would continue to be at sea after they landed. For the level line of Argentina crept slowly past them below the long marine

## PASEO

horizon, and the skyline was quite unbroken. It would remain unbroken until they came in sight of Buenos Aires after dark ; and having satisfied themselves that the Rio de la Plata, river of their fondest dreams, was quite as interesting as Lytham at low tide, they went below to pack. After dark a line of lights appeared, swung gently round them, and slid past the port-holes. The dark gentlemen who had been stamping passports in the lounge all day packed up their rubber stamps and, discarding their official airs of suspicion, became quite ordinary persons in soft felt hats on the point of returning to suburban homes. (I have always thought that the home lives of Customs officers and immigration clerks receive insufficient attention from novelists in search of piquant contrasts —the sharp eye that can detect cocaine through all integuments deceived by the most unconvincing household frauds, the wizard before whom all names fly into block capitals failing miserably to change a postal order of his own, the Argus of the passports. . . .) Other dark gentlemen were coming on board, as the shore

## ARGENTINE TANGO

lights steadied themselves and came to a stand-still in the vague outline of a lit city, where the names of proprietary articles flashed on and off under the Southern Cross and bright parallelograms of light slid comfortably along tram-lines towards the outer suburbs. The new-comers were quite as interrogative as their predecessors ; but instead of banal enquiries about our parents' maiden names and distaste for anarchists they desired to be informed as to our private estimate of Mr. Bernard Shaw, the Five Year Plan, Protection, and other scourges of mankind. For we were to be arraigned before the press of Argentina. As there was little hope of getting off the boat until these peculiar cravings had been satisfied, the deponent grew unnaturally dogmatic, told Mr. Shaw (if he studies his South American press-cuttings with due attention) exactly where he might be expected to get off, gaily pronounced the doom of Russia's hopes, and (careless of the consequences) dotted Protection one. Then, after a discharge of flashlights, the wanderers were allowed to land. That grinding sound beneath their feet was Argentina ; and, the

## PASEO

long voyage ended, they were on foreign soil at last.

And it was foreign unmistakably, from the dark eyes in the *Douane* to the vague gleams of lamp-light on the iron-work of *portes-cochères* that flashed past the carriage window with a hint of narrow streets in Paris. Foreign trams clanged slowly by to foreign destinations ; foreign couples aired themselves in foreign doorways ; and a hotel that would have been quite at home in Madrid spread hands of foreign welcome. We went to bed abroad ; and we were still abroad when we woke up and ordered coffee. Then, recalling with a sudden start some of the things that he had said to the reporters, our spokesman ordered all the morning papers ; for there is nothing in the world so filled with apprehension as the awakening of someone who has been interviewed overnight. The papers came ; and at the first glance we were still abroad, since nearly all of them were foreign. There was a grand profusion of news items with a rich foreign flavour ; our startled photographs were sandwiched in between a shooting in the mountains

## ARGENTINE TANGO

and the eloquent pronouncement of a local statesman who led a party with an unfamiliar name ; and the news from England lurked in shy paragraphs where it was elbowed by the latest from Berlin and election prospects in Jugoslavia. For at this distance Europe was all one to a sub-editor. As we turned over the little heap of newspapers, we reflected with a thrill that we were six thousand miles from home in a city that talked Spanish and was not so far from the South Pole. Then one of them fell open at a page that looked unnaturally familiar. For the whole paper was in English ; there was a good deal about a Test Match and something that somebody had said in the House of Commons. It was, it positively was an English morning paper written by Englishmen for Englishmen to read in Buenos Aires (though it was evidently printed by someone who was more familiar with some other language). The royal arms adorned its heading. Even the local news was British to a fault, with intimations that the monthly medal was to be played for this afternoon at Hurlingham (of all places in the world to find below the

## PASEO

Southern Cross), that its well-wishers had made a triumph of the Hospital Ball, and that the Scottish Ladies' Whist-drive had passed off amid universal satisfaction at a place called Banfield, a statement which received due confirmation in a photograph of several ladies who were Scottish beyond doubt. The correspondence columns were no less redolent of English hedgerows : for "Indignant" breathed his low lament, like nightingales in English woods, about the morning train-service from Temperley, and "Angry Listener" reviled the imperfection of the programmes. It was a sudden vision of England that would have brought tears to Mr. Baldwin's eyes ; and you may find it any morning in your newspaper at Buenos Aires. What is more, there are two of them—two English dailies without a word of any foreign language (except the misprints) and an agreeable tendency to belabour one another in the grand manner of British journalism. They serve an English world that moves sedately up and down between the office and its garden in the outskirts, taking lunch at the English Club or (on Saturdays) at Harrods, where the southern skies look

## ARGENTINE TANGO

down upon a splendid replica of Brompton Road. Outlying readers unfold their copies a day late on the shaded porches of estancias under the mountains, and the listening Andes hear the latest from Lingfield. For Argentina is, perhaps, the one foreign country in the world where England has made herself thoroughly at home. That is the paradox of Buenos Aires.

## II

But is it such a paradox? There has been almost from the beginning an odd convergence of the two countries and their people. In the days when Argentina was a slightly restive Spanish colony and Napoleon dragged her mother-country limply in the wake of France, British eyes were turned towards the River Plate. For Spain went to war with England, and Spanish colonies became objects of interest to Whitehall. British ministers listened with polite attention to political exiles, who appeared in Downing Street with perfect manners, airs of mystery, and interminable plans of attack on distant territories of legendary wealth and in-

## PASEO

adequate defences. The British Empire had been very largely put together from the former colonies of such European states as were rash enough to go to war with England ; and if Spain chose to join the French, there was no reason why this agreeable process should not be repeated. So dapper gentlemen in uniform bent over remarkably misleading maps of South America. Sir Arthur Wellesley, just home from India and commanding a brigade at Hastings, found himself advising ministers upon a project of attacking Mexico and was even offered the command (which he declined a trifle bleakly) of an extremely far-flung expedition, which was to start from India, capture the Philippines, pause in Australia to get its breath, and pounce across the whole length and breadth of the Pacific upon Mexico in time, if Providence was kind, to co-operate with a force launched at the same objective from Jamaica. An eager colonel was entrusted with the splendid duty of taking four battalions round Cape Horn to the conquest of Chile and, this trifle achieved, marching his men across the Andes. For geography, never a strong point with

## ARGENTINE TANGO

British ministers in time of war, was gaily disregarded ; and in times of such magnificent dementia it was not surprising that a mere admiral succumbed to the prevailing mood. Sailors are always such romantics ; and when Popham found himself in Table Bay with a few idle cruisers, what could be more natural than to plunge straight across the South Atlantic and conquer Argentina ? The River Plate was barely two months' sail from Cape Town ; the alluring project danced before his hopeful eyes ; and when it struck the perspicacious admiral that he would need some troops, he borrowed an obliging colonel, nine hundred men, four guns, and six dragoons. (His cavalry may strike military pedants as a slightly inadequate provision for the conquest of a country consisting principally of trackless plains.) One winter afternoon in 1806 the sails of this armada came up the river ; the Viceroy of the Rio de la Plata left suddenly for the interior ; there was a scuffle outside the city ; and the redcoats marched down the narrow streets of Buenos Aires. King George was solemnly proclaimed ; a quantity of Spanish

## PASEO

gold was shipped to England ; and a judicious tariff conferred a preference on British goods in England's latest colony.

But Argentina's career as a British colony was brief. For in six weeks a local force had captured their incautious conquerors ; and Colonel Beresford and his command were the first British subjects to enjoy Argentine hospitality. (Two presentation clocks, indeed, attested their enjoyment.) A more elaborate attempt to capture Buenos Aires failed a few months later under General Whitelocke ; his regimental colours decorate a Buenos Aires church ; and the vast, inconsequent design of British colonies in South America subsided in the inglorious dust of courts martial and official reprimands. The gay admiral was duly reprimanded and the unhappy Whitelocke sternly cashiered. Not that a victory on their part would have been the slightest use to England, if they had won it. For the wheel of Spanish history went round once more ; Napoleon invaded Spain in the next year ; the Spaniards rose against the French and joined the Allies ; Wellington played out his long, decisive

## ARGENTINE TANGO

game in the Peninsula ; and when the firing died away, it was quite inconceivable that Great Britain could have retained any colonies appropriated from her Spanish ally. So even if Whitelocke and Beresford had won their battles in the streets of Buenos Aires, the city must eventually have been given up by England.

Yet the episode was not without results. For in the effort to expel the invaders the colonists learned to rely upon themselves ; and when a mood of independence swept them a few years later, that lesson was applied with gusto to the Spanish garrisons. The scattered fighting of the *Reconquista* was a school where Argentina trained for the decisive victories of General San Martín ; and I am half inclined to think that the dejected General Whitelocke has earned a statue in the Plaza Mayo. Besides, the country's attitude to England was sweetened by the campaigns of 1806 and 1807, since a sporting victory is a rare aid to self-respect. Few Englishmen resent it ; and the best way to foreign hearts is a defeat. Has England ever lost a war in Ireland ? Who won the campaign in South Africa ? Yet those

## PASEO

British victories have left an aftermath of odium which compares unfavourably with Argentina's friendly mood. For Argentines reflect with a comfortable glow that the victory was theirs and that, after all, the English paid their country the supreme compliment of invasion.

## III

But that was not the last invasion. The association of Englishmen with Argentina was not ended when the sails of Whitelocke's troopships faded down the River Plate. Both countries were on the same side now, and they continued to converge. For their convergence was ordained by the blind forces of economics. In the first dawn of Argentine independence the farmers of the Pampa pleaded for the port of Buenos Aires to be opened to British commerce in their own interests ; and the author of their petition became the First Secretary of the young republic. Indeed, he died on board a British cruiser on a mission to England and was buried at sea in a British flag. There were a score of such personal convergences between the two countries. The

## ARGENTINE TANGO

early days of Argentina are full of them. An Irish seaman by the name of Brown made the first vestiges of an Argentine navy ; and victory on land in the long War of Independence came from the sword of San Martín, who arrived on the revolutionary scene from London and had served under Beresford (no longer a reluctant guest of the obliging Argentines) in the Peninsula. Englishmen, perhaps, may claim to share a national hero who was promoted for gallantry at Albuera ; and other Argentines of the heroic age, like Alvear who fought at Talavera, bore Peninsular battle-honours.

But the convergence of the countries was more than a mere happy accident of a few personal careers, of spirited young Spanish officers who had served against the French alongside Lord Wellington's redcoats, or of eccentric Englishmen who found congenial distraction in a pleasant climate and someone else's war. For the two governments began to draw together across the troubled seas of foreign politics. It was not easy for the British statesmen who had fought for twenty years to banish revolution from Europe

## PASEO

to recognise it in South America. But Wellington could face a fact—even an unwelcome fact—when he saw one ; and so early as 1820 he wrote of the Spaniards that “ one would suppose that the reconquest of their colonies by force of arms would be out of the question even to them.” Such an admission from the sword-arm of Europe was in striking contrast with the more military temper of the French, who were prepared to play the exact opposite of the noble rôle performed by La Fayette in North America. For French warships waited in French ports to carry troops for the reconquest of the rash colonists. Canning was convinced that “ France meditates and has all along meditated a direct interference in Spanish America ” ; Chateaubriand stated that French ships and treasure were available for the recovery of disobedient Spanish colonies ; and Villèle assured the King of Spain that “ if the Spanish Government wished to send an Infant to Mexico or Peru, or to any part of Spanish America, attended by troops, with a view to make an endeavour to renew the connection between those Colonies

## ARGENTINE TANGO

and Spain, the expedition now fitting out in the ports of France should be at the orders of the Spanish Government to convey the Infant and the troops wherever they pleased.” But in that very year Lord Castlereagh, no mean apostle of reaction, recognised the rebel flag of Argentina by an amendment of the Navigation Acts, and the Duke himself made an inadvertent contribution to the cause of freedom in South America by forcing Canning on the King as Foreign Secretary.

With Canning safe in office, the course was clear for a still closer convergence of Great Britain and the young republics. He had his difficulties, since Tory colleagues shared the Duke’s view that “considering what is passing in Ireland, and what all expect will happen in that country before long, the bad with hope, the good with apprehension and dread, we must take care not to give additional examples in these times of the encouragement of insurrection, and we must not be induced by clamour, by self-interested views ; by stock-jobbing, or by faction, to give the sanction of our approbation to what

## PASEO

are called the governments of these insurgent provinces.” But even the Duke admitted that “we must at last recognise all these governments”; his sole plea was that recognition might be deferred until events required it. The City was less patient, since the London merchants (of whom a forebear of my own was one) presented a petition in 1824 for the prompt recognition of Spanish-American independence; and a silent struggle inside the Cabinet was followed by the decision to send a British Consul-General to Buenos Aires with instructions to negotiate a Treaty of Commerce. This was recognition with a vengeance, and Mr. Canning was fairly entitled to his later boast that he “called the New World into existence to redress the balance of the Old.” And that is why the name of *Jorge Canning* draws grateful cheers from any educated audience in Argentina.

## IV

Their country duly enrolled in the society of nations, the Argentines were still exposed to invading Englishmen. For there was, as

## ARGENTINE TANGO

Hakluyt records, “a little locke of Lady Occasion flickering in the aire, by our handes to catch hold on, whereby we may by it once more (before all be utterly past, and for ever) discreetly and valiantly recover and enjoy, if not all our ancient & due appurtenances to this Imperiall Brittish monarchie, yet at the least some such notable portion thereof, as (al circumstances duely and justly apperteining to peace & amitie with forrein princes being offred & used) this may become the most peaceable, most rich, most puissant, & most flourishing monarchie of al els (this day) in christendome.” But the invaders came less obtrusively than Beresford’s perspiring redcoats. They came to sell ; but they remained, if not to pray, at least to settle in the country. So early as 1831 there was a British population of 5,000, which has multiplied itself by seven or eight in the succeeding century. That is why English visitors to Buenos Aires enjoy the slightly breath-taking experience of introduction to local residents with indubitably English names who cannot speak a word of English or, stranger still, pronounce it

## PASEO

with the unmistakable intonation of the River Plate. For three generations in the Argentine are apt to leave their traces. Some families—all honour to them—have patiently preserved their Anglo-Saxon tone in the surrounding ocean of *Criollos*. Others, no less worthy of respect, have merged completely in the background of Argentina, and no trace of British origin survives except an unexpected surname and an intermittent throwback in the cast of a great-grandson's features. When the flood-gates of Ireland were flung open, a rich stream of emigration poured up the River Plate ; and the *Porteño* Irish offer a delicious combination of Andalusia with County Cork. The name remains ; but when someone at the door announces “Señor Patricio O’Flanagan,” a Spanish gentleman appears.

But in its second phase the British invasion of Argentina brought more than new elements to the population. It was—it still remains—a nation of stockbreeders, where polished gentlemen in evening dress discuss the price of beef across the shaded lights of dinner-tables ; and

## ARGENTINE TANGO

four-footed immigrants from England have made a great contribution to the prosperity of Argentina. The shire-horse and the Southdown sheep, the Shorthorn and the Hereford were all British subjects who became highly useful citizens ; and in an Argentine Valhalla I am not sure that Suffolk Punch and Aberdeen Angus would not fill a loftier pedestal than any President. The country's debt to a long line of British *estancieros* is deep indeed ; and year by year slow-spoken men from English cattle-shows travel out to judge competing monsters in the *Rural* at Buenos Aires, grandsons of emigrants from English fields munching comfortably somewhere south of the Equator.

A more formidable British invasion appeared in the early years of railway construction. Without a line of rails the vast distances of Argentina were condemned to poverty and isolation. The Pampa was a Sleeping Beauty, waiting in her inaccessible retreat for an obliging prince to wake her ; and the magic wand was waved by the first grimy hand that pulled the starting-lever of a locomotive. It was a remarkable affair that

## PASEO

puffed sedately out of Buenos Aires. The parent of the brood was a Crimean veteran which had tugged little trains of army stores from Balaklava to the British trenches ; early travellers in Argentina scrutinised their engine with suspicion and, if it was a notorious character, rushed into cookshops to lay in stores of light refreshments for the journey to the suburbs. From these humble origins the invading railways spread and spread, until their tracks veined the whole country like a leaf ; and that is why the visitor from home is reassured in some unfamiliar landscape seven thousand miles from Crewe by a railway signal that *is* a railway signal (and not one of those egregious discs with which foreigners are satisfied) making its Anglo-Saxon gesture to a locomotive of familiar build. For Argentina is the one foreign country in the world where England has made herself at home ; and all the Lincoln sheep look up, as the 9.28 goes past, bound to all appearances for King's Cross. That is the paradox of Buenos Aires, the reason why the first square that you cross after landing—the one with three railway-stations and a clock-tower

## ARGENTINE TANGO

that was a singularly tactless birthday present from Great Britain to the young Republic—is the Plaza Británica, and two English morning papers appear upon its bookstalls, and it acknowledges a sort of local royalty consisting of the Prince of Wales.

*MARCHA*



## WESTERN OCEAN

### *I. Seascape*

THE scene was frankly urban. It was, to all appearances, a crowded evening in something Alley or someone's Rents. A hollow square of onlookers stood round and stared at what was going on with the steady concentration of householders interrupted in their evening shopping by a more than usually promising street-accident. It must have been a warmish evening, as none of them seemed to be wearing hats except a petty officer who was home, no doubt, on leave. And the event, whatever it might be, which had attracted them, was evidently of rare interest since eager heads clustered on dangerously congested balconies and protruded from windows. Whatever it might be, a large number of people, including a pair of chefs from a neighbouring restaurant, seemed to think that it was worth stopping to look at ; and they

## ARGENTINE TANGO

looked with the unconcealed attention of persons who have money on it. Perhaps they had ; for there were moments when it was distinctly worth a modest bet. A pair of bell-boys crouched to leap at one another with the tigerish ferocity of which bell-boys are capable off duty. I seemed to recognise one of them vaguely and thrilled with all the loyalty one feels for members of one's private circle when seen stripped and panting, as the bell goes for the second round. Their boxing was correct but fierce, with the full savagery of amateurs who mean to get it over in three rounds instead of the professional languor that lasts fifteen and lives to fight another day. They lunged and feinted under the raw light of the electrics ; and as a blow went home, the crowded alley roared approval. It must have been a questionable neighbourhood, since it made no effort to conceal its partiality for a coloured pugilist, who took the stage with an endearing smile. The wall of faces on the upper balconies beamed back at him ; and he seemed to have a host of friends in every quarter of the ring-side. The packed quadrangle stared ; and

## MARCHA

if one's eye wandered above the piled spectators to the sky, there seemed to be more stars than usual. Somehow one does not expect to find a night of silver stars above a crowded alley in a town with a marked taste for boxing. But there it was ; the night sky was positively African ; and what is more, it seemed to move a little. It moved quite unmistakably ; the sky was positively slipping past us overhead with grave deliberation ; and sometimes it swayed a little. For we were watching boxing in mid-ocean, two thousand miles from home. That was why I sat and smoked in the next seat to a trim figure in the white that officers affect in the tropics, and began to wonder how I should propose my vote of thanks for the ship's boxing contest.

### *2. The Old Hands*

You had not noticed them at Waterloo before the boat-train went. And even if you had, it may be doubted whether that inconspicuous grey suiting and the dowdy little dress by which it was accompanied would have held your attention for

## ARGENTINE TANGO

any length of time. True, the grey suit, which represented the last breath of European fashion as it expired in the best tailor's at Pernambuco, had something odd about the set of its lapels ; and the little dress—proud effort of a 'little woman' at Woking, to whom its wearer had been introduced by a relation—was somehow lacking in dramatic effect. But you had other things to think about before the whistles went and the long train drew out for Southampton Docks. If the truth must be told, you felt yourself a rather interesting figure, as you stood that morning at the carriage window bravely balancing between the Old World and the New. Passers-by, you hoped, pointed respectfully and whispered that you would shortly be on the Equator, while railway porters paused in the very act of loading a van for Ilfracombe to see a traveller bound for Brazil. For you were feeling a shade spectacular ; and it was little wonder that you had no attention to spare for the other couple, who had so scandalously neglected the spectacular aspects of their departure. They walked briskly up the platform carrying a good deal of their own luggage

## MARCHA

and installed themselves with as little ceremony as if they had been going down to Woking to see his married sister. They had no sense of the occasion ; and in their business-like demeanour they seemed to miss completely the high drama of a start for South America. Perhaps they had been there before.

Once on board the liner, they continued to be slightly irritating, though in a different way. For as you thrilled in the first exploration of those sounding corridors, they were offensively at home. Nothing, I suspect, is more exasperating to new-comers in Heaven than the bored demeanour of earlier arrivals staring listlessly into the crystal sea with their hands in their trouser pockets and a halo which they have barely troubled to put on straight. So it was something of a shock to find them comfortably seated in the smoking-room, when you stumbled into it quite unexpectedly. They looked entirely out of place among those polished and resplendent splendours ; but just as you prepared to pity them, they addressed the presiding deity by his Christian name and received a favourable reply. This

## ARGENTINE TANGO

was a trifle disconcerting, although for a day or so they dropped into that insignificance which seemed to be their native element. Her outfit was negligible and his flannels, if the truth must be confessed, were distinctly grubby ; though when the sun began to shine, it was a little irritating to find that he appeared to be endowed with an uncanny foreknowledge of all the shady corners on the upper deck. For every expedition in search of a fresh camping-ground ended in a humiliating discovery that they had got there first. His flannels were immovably installed, and a depressing hat of hers, whose origins hovered uncertainly between Woking and Pernambuco, was partly visible behind the worst novel of the season. By all the rules such obviously minor characters should have drooped modestly in some secluded background, leaving the ship's life to be carried on by the principals. But they ignored their rôle disgracefully. Insisting upon playing lead, they took to themselves others of their kind whom they appeared to know already, and they made a little world that was always meeting by appointment in the bar

## MARCHA

or sleeping where we wished to sleep or playing games at the precise moments when we wished to play them. That, taking one thing with another, was where one saw them at their worst. Deck games revealed them, since they were always playing games that never seemed to end ; or if anybody else managed to appropriate the court for a few minutes, they stood waiting hungrily for them to finish and making no effort to conceal their scorn of other people's play. We disliked them more than ever ; and our dislike was not diminished when the hot weather came and their men sloped comfortably round in linen suits that seemed to fit them, whilst our own creaked just as stiffly as they had the day that we first tried them on a week before at the tropical outfitter's.

The days grew warmer ; and in some unpleasing way they seemed to fit into the picture better than we did ourselves. Even that dejected hat developed a strange relevance to the equatorial scene. We drooped a little in the heat ; and in this failure of our resistance the ship became almost wholly theirs. Their flannels

## ARGENTINE TANGO

and their frightful millinery were everywhere ; and as we drooped, they were galvanised into an unnatural activity. For the ship's sports were imminent ; and they were busy hounding total strangers to subscribe small sums of money for prizes which they proposed to win. Now we could see the reason for their offensive assiduity at deck games ; and when the fatal afternoon arrived, they swept the board. Grubby or not, those flannels leapt about the court with rare agility ; their owners propelled every sort of missile with a cunning learnt on a score of voyages ; and their womenkind were Amazons in fact as well as in appearance. They were all out to win ; and, apart from a slight difficulty in beating one another, they won without much effort. Indeed, the prize-giving became a slightly ignoble share-out between their little world.

From now on their voyage was one protracted gala. For that was precisely what it was for them—their triennial round of gaiety, of social brilliance, of talk, of dancing, of games where they knew all the rules and competitions where

## MARCHA

they could win all the prizes. We tried not to mind, of course, although it was a little galling to live under the dominion of their never-ending talk to one another about the new Club and an eventful picnic in 1923. Not that their talk was always unrewarding, since they had a vein of up-country reminiscence which led respectful hearers into the very heart of provincial revolutions and portrayed vividly the defects of a social system under which, on returning from the office, one was apt to find two Federal field-guns in the garden and a rebel machine-gun section sweeping the corner of the road, as the bad times set in when all the ladies were consigned to the Club in hopes that neither side would shell it, while the men lumbered cheerfully back to the office in their dingy flannels lest England's business with the world should suffer interruption. Dimly, as the shadowy coast of a new continent approached, we began to suspect why they had been quite so determined in their enjoyment of the voyage, of their endless talks in the smoking-room, of the sports, of everything on board that we had tried

## ARGENTINE TANGO

to take for granted. For one steamy afternoon we lay beside a water-front where the black porters crowded in the glare, and a perspiring stevedore was far too hot to blaspheme. It was not easy to imagine whom of our elegant company we should put ashore in such surroundings. But two familiar figures were going down the ladder—the well-cut linen suit and, meekly following, that dismal hat, restored at last to the place where it belonged.

### 3. *Equatorial*

The wind came from nowhere, because there was nowhere for it to come from. That was the odd thing about it. For its point of departure, if it had one, was somewhere just ahead of us below the skyline ; but there was nothing there. That was quite undeniable. Had we not been engaged for days in proving that there was nothing there ? We had been driving steadily towards it in the hope, presumably, of finding something ; but it was something like a week since there had been anything at all for

## MARCHA

us to look at. There was still the sea, of course. That perfect colour would have drawn thousands to a beach to look at it ; but such colours are not visible from any coast. For they can only be distilled from deep-sea waters by the deep light of mid-ocean, where there is nothing to cast any shadow. The tone, if one must find a name for it, was blue ; but it was a blue that soared far beyond the reach of adjectives ; and it gleamed deepest where it was jewelled with the leaping diamonds from our cutwater, and our creamy wake lay gracefully across it like a Court lady's train. We moved across it, fixed centre of a moving circle, under the sky ; and that, if one must find a name for it, was blue as well. But the sky's blue was different from the sea's, since it was pure light—except, of course, when it put on all its jewels after dinner and swept overhead in black and silver. The still ship moved on between sea and sky, and the invisible wind blew steadily from nowhere.

Such winds have a peculiar power to irritate. I have known a wind that blew from nowhere in the heart of Africa and grew almost maddening

## ARGENTINE TANGO

after three days of its invisible presence, as the tall palms of the oasis dipped and bowed to one another and the sand borne upon its wings blurred the hard outline of the Atlas. The desert wind of the Sahara drives upon the nerves ; and the sea-wind of the Equator has something of that irritant effect. For it is a little trying to be played upon so steadily by something quite invisible that comes from nowhere. There was indubitably nothing there. Indeed, to all appearances there would never be anything again in the vast emptiness of sea and sky. It was just an airy and disused store-room where one might store a continent, and it had somehow got forgotten. One had always read that the Equator was an imaginary line ; but one had never dreamt that it could be quite so imaginary as this. Yet from some unseen point in the blue in front of us the world began to curve towards another Pole and the vast paradox of the Southern Hemisphere commenced. That was another world, where travellers moved southwards to escape the heat or travelled north into the glare of tropical plantations. The ship moved slowly on ; and the un-

## MARCHA

comfortable wind of the Equator blew steadily along the shaded decks.

### *4. Brazilian Landfall*

The landscape, the unvarying landscape of mid-ocean changed suddenly, as a dark line appeared ahead, came slowly nearer, filled the whole horizon, turned from darkness to a deep shade of green, and stood revealed in the broad equatorial glare as an interminable line of palms. That was Brazil. We stared and stared, distinguishing a range of hills and something that looked like a building. We were across the ocean now ; and here was South America. For it was here indeed, sedately seated in the stern-sheets of the pilot's launch that bobbed wildly over waves infested (as we learned respectfully) with shark. And presently it climbed on board, smoking a strong cigar and wearing a white uniform. The Pernambuco pilot is a perfect lesson in tropical deportment, with his linen suit, sun-helmet, and the long cheroot tilted at the precise angle which we have learned to expect of dwellers in far

## ARGENTINE TANGO

places. Middle-aged magazine-readers felt comfortably assured at sight of him that Captain Kettle could not be far off. There was, indeed, no reason why he should be ; for the ingredients of his familiar scene were all present and correct that afternoon at Pernambuco. The shallow waters of a dangerous coast foamed round us, as we swept inshore in a slow curve ; the palms were taller now ; and all the buildings on the shore stood square and white in the untempered glare of a Brazilian afternoon. The green coast was reaching out for us ; and we could make out among the palms of a long promontory, that was the very tip of South America, the familiar gesture of church towers. That was Olinda, where the Dutchmen built their churches, as they smoked away the endless afternoons and dreamed of Amsterdam and wondered how Van Tromp was getting on against the English and tramped back to duty in the little fort across the swamp which guarded Pernambuco from the Portuguese. But the Portuguese returned ; and here was Pernambuco with the green flag of Brazil limply displayed at every mast-head.

## MARCHA

It was an afternoon of sullen heat. A storm was brewing somewhere below the skyline ; and the Equator, which was not far off, seemed to come suddenly nearer as we stepped ashore. Down on the quay the air was very still after the moving breezes of mid-ocean ; and the quay-side population seemed almost wholly African. For Africa in every shade from a deep mauve to olive-green looked on with ivory eyes beneath innumerable boaters, as we made our first landing in South America. This was a shade bewildering. The city fathers, who rather liked to term the place 'the Venice of Brazil,' fostered a *plage* entitled Bôa Vista, and adorned the street-plan of Pernambuco with a thoroughfare named Rua do Bom Jesus, had done little to prepare us for this African encounter. We should have been forewarned, of course, by the pilot's equatorial uniform. Besides, one is apt to meet dark faces in ports that ship orchids and molasses. Someone was selling snake-skins, as we strolled towards the town, where the trams clanked down shaded streets with an armed policeman standing beside every driver. That very afternoon, it seemed,

## ARGENTINE TANGO

the transport-workers had gone back to work ; and it was felt that a revolver at the steering-wheel would prove encouraging to late-comers. This heartening whiff of Captain Kettle contrasted oddly with an elaborate pantomime of traffic-control on the best European models ; and Europe breathed again in sudden vistas of rococo churches along the endless waterfronts of Pernambuco's meres.

But the place was most itself, I think, on the long causeway through the swamp outside the town. We drove along one morning in an uncertain automobile propelled by our still more uncertain grasp of Portuguese and haunted by a fear that it would break down somewhere along that stretch of sunny road, leaving us marooned, like poor Ben Gunn, in the still sunshine while the ship went on without us. If one must be marooned, few places would be more appropriate than a banana swamp four miles from Pernambuco, with a Dutch colonial fort comfortably mouldering in the sunshine and abundant promise of tarantulas. Somewhere ahead of us the little hill of Olinda pointed its church towers at

## MARCHA

the sky, and the swamp buzzed happily all round. Strange quarters, one reflected, for a troop of Rembrandt's Dutchmen. Yet their drums had sounded down the road, as they mounted the night watch and waited for the news from home in the broad shadow of their hats. Their little churches still stand on the point, though the Pope has them now ; and as the ships come in from Europe, the towers of Olinda watch the gateway of Brazil.

### 5. *Mad Metropolis*

The whole thing was wildly improbable. Looking back, I am inclined to think it never happened ; and in justice to myself it should be plainly stated that even at the time I had my doubts. For anyone might be excused for doubting Rio. Its air is heavy with unreality ; and cautious travellers, habituated to landscapes couched in a more normal idiom, justifiably refuse to believe a word of it. The mountains alone, a palpable invention of some demented stage designer, would not convince a child ; and at any moment visitors expect to walk clean

## ARGENTINE TANGO

through the whole extravagant device and come out on the other side to find a disillusioned stage-hand working the lights. So much, one is inclined to say, for Rio.

But the amazing thing about the place is that nobody has ever found it out. The shameless creature still persists in staying where it is and repeating its incredible tissue of visual fabrications to each new arrival. Incoming steamers steal quietly upon it at dawn ; and the grey water slides by noiselessly, as they pick their way between unlikely islands with bulbous silhouettes. These may be properly dismissed as the last fancies of the night ; and nothing is more disconcerting than to find them still in the same place by daylight. But as the ships come in at dawn, the islands slide away into the darkness like humped monsters of the night. The steamer feels its quiet way towards the land, and eyes strain through the night for a first glimpse of Rio. But there was nothing there to see. The night sky was still full of clouds. Clouds masked the dawn ; great masses of them lay all round ; and long lines of fantastic clouds marched off into the distance.

## MARCHA

Range after range of them, piled and incredible, prepared to take the sunrise ; and as the east began to pale, Rio prepared its first surprise. For the heaped dementia of morning clouds, which should have melted in the first light of dawn, failed to dissolve. The startled watchers on the deck saw the light change ; but as it changed, the wilderness of tumbled clouds became a wild country of disordered mountains—of carved and tilted mountains heaped in mad profusion and leaning in all directions. Some round, some square, some conical, but all frankly insane in their design, the mountains come crowding to the sea ; and one, the maddest of them all, stands at the water's edge to watch the ships go by. After that humped hallucination anything, you feel, is possible. Small wonder that enquiring souls ascend it seated in a little tram that crawls along the sky suspended from a piece of string. For the mad outline of the Sugarloaf stands at the gate of Rio like Phil May's lunatic, inviting visitors to come inside.

And once inside, you are soon past surprise. The hand of Nature (powerfully aided by the

## ARGENTINE TANGO

hand of man) stuns new arrivals into a sort of happy dream where anything may happen. Suburban streets end suddenly against the grey flank of a lonely mountain that has somehow got forgotten in a residential neighbourhood ; roads climb out of a shopping district into the dripping silence of a forest in the tropics, where the big lianas hang and unimagined flowers blaze in the shadow of the trees, and drivers of oncoming traffic are apt to be slightly bewildered by enormous blue butterflies flapping slowly towards them ; and a road-tunnel full of trams opens incredibly upon the sudden blue of unexpected bays that curve between a line of big Atlantic rollers and a tall plantation, where the palms are full of enthusiasts watching Association football. In such surroundings it should plainly cause no surprise to drive straight up a mountain (taking train for the last vertical ascent) and to emerge into the sunshine of the summit in full view of all the kingdoms of the earth. Speaking for myself, I have little taste for these vertiginous exploits ; but if vertigo is ever worth enduring, sufferers are richly rewarded at the top of Corcovado. The

## MARCHA

ruled streets of Rio, the curving beaches, and the wild tumult of the mountains are all spread before them in clear Brazilian light. Rectangular town-planning offers few attractions to the eye, though it is fascinating to observe the ingenuity that has contrived to fit a tiny grid-iron of streets into every interstice between the mountains. But the blue bays edged with a white line of breakers and the mounting madness of the hills that march away into Brazil are a splendour to the eye, as the morning sunshine looks down quietly upon grey mountain-sides, the vivid green of tropical tree-tops, and the blue ocean.

Such, in barest outline, is the background of Rio ; and what city could fail to give a rare performance on such a stage ? Tremendous avenues of palms stalk through its streets, like one of Mr. Gladstone's perorations, to a not far-distant goal ; a vast hotel looks comfortably out to sea across a road where happy citizens in bathing-suits thread in and out among the traffic *en route* for the Copacabana surf. I retain an unusual tenderness for that hotel, since it came upon me after a fortnight at sea, and its soft-footed service of

## ARGENTINE TANGO

a joyously protracted lunch lives in a grateful memory. What wine so cool, what cigars half so long, what cocktails so reviving to a drooping spirit as those absorbed upon its terrace in full view of the crowding bathers on the beach in front and a big liner nosing cautiously round the Sugarloaf into Rio harbour ? Political exile from other states in South America must be considerably alleviated by a sojourn at Copacabana. One exile, at any rate, from a neighbouring republic appeared to find it so, as he hung enviably absorbed, head down and elbows working happily, above his salad. And one could find it in one's heart to pity politicians in Brazil, because when they go into exile, it cannot be to that incomparable hotel at Copacabana.

Generously refreshed and with that happy consciousness that the entrance-hall was slightly larger than it had appeared on our arrival, which indicates that one has lunched, we left the hospitable building. Some functionary summoned a car, his efforts supplemented by our large, imperial gestures ; and we prepared to face the massed surprises of Rio once again. Our nerves

## MARCHA

were nicely toned to resist shocks. It was becoming usual with us to switchback on a coast-wise road between the deep Atlantic blue and the green of jungles, where the waterfalls dripped endlessly between trees that towered out of sight. Bronze negresses arrayed in every colour of the spectrum were commonplace wayfarers now. Nothing was more obvious than that stray hawkers should hail taxis on quiet country roads with a view to selling monkeys to their fares. And when our automobile in a post-prandial mood that answered to our own proceeded to invade a public park and frisk along its curving footpaths, scattering the Sunday nursemaids in a gay charge, we had scarcely a scream left. For we were past surprises now ; and it seemed only fitting that unlikely quadrupeds with pink, transparent ears should hop ungracefully out of our way, whilst our career was watched suspiciously from an adjacent building by something that appeared to be a coloured fire-brigade escaped from some forgotten comic film. Were we not in Rio, where anything might happen ?

This stunned and happy temper, when the mind

## ARGENTINE TANGO

refuses to be shocked by anything, is the mood induced by the first impact of the city. For there is no reason in the world why any portent which the mind can frame (as well as several of which it had not previously known itself to be capable) should not appear on that stupendous scene. A dinosaur might shuffle through the deep greenery of Tijuca and cause no surprise ; a flight of pterodactyls circling the Sugarloaf would be quite in place. The silence of a mere beside the road may be broken at any moment by a rising alligator ; and alligators might diversify the rich façade of any Rio building without attracting much attention on those crowded pediments. For architecture has been nicely sensitive to the prevailing oddity ; and the Brazilian fancy plays with the solemn problems of construction like a kitten with a ball of wool. Kittenish, indeed, the slogan which it brandishes in letters ten feet high at departing steamers, where a lonely skyscraper reprovingly remarks like some arch New England aunt, "*A Noite.*"

The lettering blurs slowly, as the ship moves away ; and the repulsive skyscraper fades merci-

## MARCHA

fully into the shifting background. As the city drops back into the distance, the mad profusion of its mountains riots along the sky once more. The bulbous islands in the bay slide into place and drop ungraceful curtseys, as the ship begins to lift a little to the swell. But the sea seems a more stable element than those insanely tilted mountains ; and one, the maddest of them all, stands at the water's edge to wave its lunatic perspective in a last, irresistible appeal to come back to Rio.

## 6. *Shark*

As sport, it sounded rather formidable. There was a good deal of talk to awe-struck listeners of which the upshot, if I remember rightly, was that on some previous occasion the ship's carpenter had lost a leg simply because the catch had been imperfectly controlled after it came on board. That was the secret of success. Anyone, it seemed, could land a shark ; but its proper treatment after landing called for expert assistance and advice, and neglect of these elementary precautions was apt to be followed by serious

## ARGENTINE TANGO

consequences. As we should be on the fishing-ground at Bahia a little after ten, we dined with high resolve ; the health of the ship's carpenter's remaining leg was drunk with some emotion ; and after dinner the fishermen withdrew to dress for their exertions, emerging in a costume vaguely reminiscent of a poacher with marine proclivities. Thus arrayed, they journeyed to the chosen scene of their exploits on the ship's uttermost extremity, where cooks come up to breathe and stewards gossip in the shade of iron stanchions and emigrants stare glassily at nothing, while their unnumbered offspring crawl perilously round the notice which invites approaching shipping (in three languages) to be careful of our propellers.

The night was still ; across the water the heaped lights, piled on one another at unusual levels, indicated the strange silhouette of Bahia ; and a few spectators—relatives, no doubt, of the ship's carpenter—watched curiously, as the intrepid fishermen spread out their tackle. It was distinctly unconventional. A length of chain, *item* a hook that would have formed a serviceable addition to the equipment of St. George, *item* one

## MARCHA

large piece of pork certified by the cook to be unfit for human consumption but, by the same token, powerfully attractive to sharks. These, with a mile or so of rope, completed the shark-fisher's outfit ; and, with a muttered prayer, they got to work. The pork was fitted to the hook, the hook connected with the chain, and the whole sublime contraption, after swinging vigorously round the deck to the imminent peril of several impassive emigrants, was committed to the deep. The emigrants stared darkly, shocked by the wanton waste of foodstuffs and more convinced than ever of the insanity of Englishmen. The Englishmen stared too, and the pork bobbed alluringly on the still water in the starlight. There was a long interval, while we remembered hard the proper way to deal with sharks on deck ; and nothing happened.

Our bait, rendered no more attractive by its bathe, was cast once more ; and once more nothing happened. Eager helpers fetched refreshments for the fishermen exhausted by their labours ; and, invigorated by these reinforcements, they essayed a tremendous cast. The

## ARGENTINE TANGO

sodden pork swished dizzily round their heads and went sailing through the night. It took the water with a distant splash ; and we crouched attentively to listen for a rising shark. Somewhere in the darkness the engine of a motor-boat stopped suddenly. For its propeller and our chain had met in one inextricable embrace. We had a bite at last ; and we had caught a launch containing sixteen coloured gentlemen. (That would be two for each for us, if we could get them stuffed and mounted.) Quite undeterred, the shark-fishers sat on at their heroic vigil, remembering the proper management of sharks on crowded decks. That was the secret of success. . . .

### 7. *Paulista*

The road hung dizzily above the plain, and the plain ended in the sea. Two thousand feet below, the curving reaches of the Santos river wound through the haze towards the coast ; and the whole plain was heavy with the melancholy fragrance of burning coffee—of half a crop of the best coffee in Brazil burning in the spring sun-

## MARCHA

shine to keep up the price to coffee-drinkers five thousand miles away. But the air was almost chilly at that angle of the mountain road two thousand feet and more above the plain. A wisp of cloud hung round the little inn, as we climbed back into the cars to drop down the mountain-side to Santos. Then the cars started, and we dropped. No one, I think, since Lucifer has ever dropped so suddenly. The little inn shot upwards to the sky like an express elevator in a New York skyscraper, as we plunged down towards the plain. The racing tree-tops leapt at us and ranged themselves in an impressive frieze along the upper edges of the scene to watch our terrifying progress, and the road flicked endless lengths of grey beneath our leaping wheels. A wind went roaring past. Narrowing our streaming eyes against it, we could see tiny strings of motor-lorries coming slowly up the lower angles of the road with heavy loads for São Paulo. But we had not much attention to spare for other traffic, as we went swooping down that incomparable road towards the plain, holding firmly on to anything in reach. Several of the com-

## ARGENTINE TANGO

pany prayed for the first time in years ; for those far-sighted engineers, pained at the thought that anything might possibly delay our downward progress, had banked the corners like a racing track ; and the two cars shot round each angle of the long descent in a skid that would develop unsuspected powers of prayer in a motor-bandit. Our drivers crouched above their steering-wheels like dervishes at their devotions ; and we remembered suddenly, as the steep countryside shot upwards past us, that we must be getting near the climbing lorries with their heavy loads bound for São Paulo. That was an uncomfortable thought, with a sheer Brazilian cliff on one side and a vertical descent into an admirable landscape on the other. But there was not much time to think ; and even if we thought, it would not do much good. So we shut our streaming eyes and held on tight and hoped that, if anything occurred, the local press would print our names with some approach to accuracy. (That is, I think, the worst penalty incurred by British subjects who involve themselves in avoidable fatalities abroad ; for no fate is more undignified

## MARCHA

than to be ushered into the Hereafter as a misprint.) Somewhere along that wild descent a streak of lorries passed us. A few more skids tore at our vitals ; the trees came slowly to a reasonable level ; and we were comfortably navigating the uneventful plain, where the Santos river winds through the scent of burning coffee to the sea. We wiped our eyes and counted one another and felt exceedingly unwell, since it is far from wholesome to drop two thousand five hundred feet in something under ten minutes. Even the Valkyrie must have had their weaker moments, when they wished that they had chosen some more sedentary occupation.

### *8. River Plate*

The rain fell steadily outside the Yacht Club. But that did not make much difference, as the Yacht Club was surrounded by water on three sides already. So we lunched happily inside and watched the deluge streaming down the glass, as the rain drove in steadily from the River Plate and swept on to blur the outlines of the liners in the North Basin. The talk was more vociferous

## ARGENTINE TANGO

than usual ; for something was impending, and (like most events in new countries) it was to be quite without precedent. Besides, the great event, if it materialised, would be peculiarly the Yacht Club's. So we talked louder than ever, as lunch circulated in that happy glass-house and the water-front of Buenos Aires melted into the driving rain.

A little after four, as lunch was dying down, a sense of imminent events began to creep abroad ; and the company was torn by doubts as to the best place to see them from. There were two schools of thought—the Viking, which believed that they would happen in the rain outside and struggled bravely out of the big windows on to the terrace, and the Capuan, who were more numerous by far and, preferring to remain indoors, climbed all over lunch-tables to command a view of the dining-room. As it turned out, both parties were correct. For the high drama of the afternoon was in two acts. The first began when a blurred line of shipping came slowly through the rain towards us. It was not altogether easy for the inexpert to detect which

## MARCHA

precisely was the heroic sailing-ship that had sailed all the way from Europe. But there could be little doubt about the tug whose dripping awning sheltered a brass band that was pounding bravely through every single verse of the Argentine national anthem (and the composer has not stinted Argentina). The liners in the Basin roared a greeting through the rain ; the streaming instrumentalists plied answering trombones ; and as they passed, we all waved jubilant umbrellas to welcome *Ingrid* home to the Club after her stupendous voyage.

That was the first stage of the rejoicings. After that the scene was moved indoors, where the heroes of her crew were to be fittingly received ; and we stood expectantly on tables, whilst un-hurried experts adjusted microphones and press photographers poured out magnesium and statesmen put on their pince-nez to read over their remarks for the last time. After several false starts, in which stray late-comers were in imminent peril of a more than civic welcome, the heroes came. They were deliciously embarrassed ; and the discomfort of those brave young men was not

## ARGENTINE TANGO

reduced by the necessity of holding large bouquets, as the magnesium exploded and their country's spokesmen read out considerable orations, in which a rich field of historical allusion was thoroughly exploited. As for the rest of us, we stood round precariously on tables or pushed one another off or indulged in general conversation, pausing to ejaculate '*Muy bien*' impressively at a particularly well-chosen historical allusion. When I left a little after six, a minister was comfortably launched upon the theme of naval construction. It was still raining hard ; and *Ingrid*, whose home-coming to "anker" (as Hakluyt puts it) "in the mighty river of Plate" had caused all the trouble, bobbed comfortably on the North Basin, indifferent to the celebrations.

## TRANSANDINE

### I

THEY had been travelling all night across an endless plain, where there was nothing to be seen except dim cattle and way-stations with unlikely names. It was not easy to believe in the real existence of a junction called Vicuña Mackenna ; and when their informant added that this wild amalgam of an extinct Liberal statesman with a local quadruped was named after a distinguished poet, they made no further effort to conceal their incredulity.

They had been travelling all night across the featureless immensity ; they had been travelling across it, for the matter of that, all the day before, ever since the International drew out of Buenos Aires, headed for Chile. As it puffed comfortably all day long, the endless vistas of the Pampa stretched away to meet the sky ; and all through the night they had slept in perfect confidence

## ARGENTINE TANGO

that there was nothing in the world for them to look at. Outside their shuttered windows, where the dust of the San Luis desert had congealed, it must be paling now. But there would be nothing there to see except more cattle and more dusty little stations inartistically disposed on that interminable plain. Still, there could be no harm in looking ; and as they looked, the unexpected happened. For the plain, the endless plain, was still the same ; but as they looked, it tilted suddenly towards the sky, and fifty miles away the Cordillera of the Andes took the morning sun.

## II

You cannot keep your eyes away from it. It draws them irresistibly, wherever you may be. For there is nothing in the whole drama of landscape that can compare with it. I have not seen the Himalaya stand up out of India ; but no European range climbs half so suddenly towards the sky, and the steep rise of the Rocky Mountains above Colorado and the Great Plains seems almost gradual by comparison with the piled and

## MARCHA

towering obstruction of the Andes, where they lie across the level road from Buenos Aires to the Pacific.

That tall perspective on the sky is the unchanging background of Mendoza ; and its fascination interrupts your shopping in the little town, where more firearms are exposed for sale than seems altogether healthy and street-hawkers tempt the passer-by with arms wreathed in revolver-belts like vendors of braces in more peaceable localities. The local traffic-problem must be gravely increased by the suicidal tendency of visitors to step into the road with faces turned immovably towards the mountains on the sky. For the mountain-wall that bars the road to Chile draws the eye irresistibly. There may be other things to look at ; but you cannot keep your eyes away from it.

Small wonder that it came, an uninvited guest, to the picnic that afternoon. The green terrace on the little hill that overlooked the plain was a perfect camping-ground. For inexhaustible supplies of all that renders open-air life in Argentina endurable—of hot roast lamb, of red

## ARGENTINE TANGO

wine, of dance-music—sprang from its miraculous soil ; and after lunch there seemed little more to do for persons disinclined to dance than to lie comfortably in the shade and look out across the vineyards. That plain was more than half Italian. Its neat villages, ranged vines, and the long lines of poplar belonged to Lombardy ; there was a liberal display of the Italian colours, where cheerful emigrants recalled some anniversary of the *Risorgimento* ; and one looked instinctively for a mild Apennine background or some perspective of the distant Alps. But the scene had a harsher ending. For there, beyond the poplars and the green carpet of trim vineyards, the Cordillera of the Andes stalked along the sky, two hundred miles from end to end.

One had read often of a wall of mountains ; but the spectacle is far less common than the phrase, since our domesticated mountain-ranges are a little apt to huddle together with a faint air of apology for any inconvenience that they may cause. A wall of mountains on the sky is a rare spectacle. Moreover, the approach to other mountains is gradual, and the main

## MARCHA

range lurks discreetly out of sight, screened by a line of modest foothills that need occasion no alarm. But that is not the Andine way ; for the whole mountain-barrier is exposed to view in one stupendous panorama. Two hundred miles from end to end, the mountains climb along the sky. The green carpet of the plain ends suddenly in a brown line of foothills, etched against the white behind them ; next, the snow mountains stand ranged in order from the great shoulder of Tupungato far to the south along the line of summits, where the Andes go marching northward to Peru ; and, behind all, the mounting walls of the great fortress climb towards the central keep of Aconcagua. For the Cordillera of the Andes is a gigantic exercise in military architecture. First, a line of outworks rising sharply from the plain ; then the brown redoubts of the foothills climbing steadily towards the main defences ; and, last of all, the freezing bastions on the sky that look down into Chile. The mountains wait in line, watched by respectful villages among the vineyards in the plain ; and as the great wall

## ARGENTINE TANGO

of the Andes stands there in the sunshine, you cannot turn your eyes away.

### III

It might seem superfluous to dramatise the Andes ; for what human touch could possibly increase the impact of that tremendous spectacle ? A lonely tower would be merely laughable, and the customary device of a frail bridge spanning a dark chasm could add nothing to the drama of that silent wall of mountains. Yet a reckless artist has gripped the theme and, luck or genius assisting, subdued his mutinous material with an astonishing result.

The road beyond Mendoza drives straight at the mountains down the long perspective of a park. Then, lifting slightly, it climbs round a little height above a purgatorial and blasted landscape of dry rivers wandering in a brown wilderness of piled and tumbled rocks. The steep ascent ends suddenly in the fixed gesture of a monument that crowns the little hill. Most monuments in young republics are a trifle forced ; there is a lamentable tendency for females of

## MARCHA

gigantic size to perform allegorical acts with cornucopiæ ; and, at first sight, this towering extravaganza in bronze seemed to be an exercise in the familiar manner. Surmounted by a soaring woman, who appeared to rise with some difficulty from a charge of cavalry, it rioted all round its pedestal with even more than the customary verve. For the gigantic female, uttering the silent yell of emotional statuary, flapped enormous wings, and exhibited the fragments of her chains in raised, triumphant hands, whilst her attendant cavalry galloped precariously underneath upon an eminence no larger than their horses' hoofs. Another second, the awed spectator feels, and they will all have gone over the edge together, leaving the pedestal completely empty. For if the truth must be confessed, the note on the top storey of that monument was distinctly forced. But the balance was redressed below, where a lonely horseman sat his horse with folded arms. There is no excess of drama here. A quiet figure in a long greatcoat, he sat quietly at gaze. The reins had fallen on his horse's neck ; and it walked slowly forward,

## ARGENTINE TANGO

leaving a little troop of cavalry halted behind the General. That was how San Martín marched five thousand men across the Andes and freed Chile. He went out of Mendoza by the great pass of Uspallata, and his little column wound in and out among the peaks —those peaks that stand there in the sunshine, the still background of his monument. For the gigantic sculpture of the Andes is subdued to this immense design ; and, silent on his horse, San Martín stares eternally at the great mountains that he crossed.

## IV

The road across the plain wanders with diffidence towards the Andes. For it would never do to make a frontal charge at that stupendous obstacle. Even the railway sidles almost furtively towards it, as though it hoped to escape observation by the dark forces that defend the lonely summits. In the plain behind, the afternoon sun looks down pleasantly on the last level miles of Argentina, as road and rail together creep round the shoulder of a ridge into

## MARCHA

the silence of the Cordillera. There is no sound except the grating of the wheels ; and when it stops, the little voice of the Mendoza river in its gorge drops to a whisper. On the sky tall mountains silently change places to watch the travellers go by. The light is failing ; and there is a hint of menace in the deep shadows at their base, where a pale strip of road winds through the gloom towards the summits. The folded hills look down ; the little road winds on ; the river whispers in its gorge ; a wheeling condor eyes the gorge ; and as the light dies off the peaks that guard the road to Chile, the dark forces wait.

## ETCHINGS, FIRST STATE

### *I. Visit of Courtesy*

TEN young men debouching from a tram need scarcely have caused quite so much excitement. Males must alight from trams in Buenos Aires without exciting comment. One might, perhaps, have understood it if they had been ten young ladies. But the sensation was undoubtedly, as the tram deposited them and went clanging off across the Plaza Mayo. Several policemen looked in their direction and fingered automatics ; there was a rapid concentration of plain-clothes men on the terrace of Government House ; and a sentry at the door in the impressive uniform with which Argentina preserves the memory of San Martín stood hurriedly to attention. For ten young men—there could not be the slightest doubt of it—were moving in a body upon Government House. This was a rash proceeding, since concentrations of male visitors

## MARCHA

were evidently unwelcome. There was no knowing what ten young men might not be up to. For one thing, several of them had their hands in their trousers pockets. Besides, the Provisional Government contained exactly ten members ; and other changes of régime had opened with the casual arrival of ten individuals at Government House. So the gendarmerie sprang up on every side of them in an expectant sort of way, as they strolled innocently up to the big front-door.

To everyone's surprise they were admitted. The Government of Argentina received its latest visitors with its accustomed courtesy ; and, disappointed of a *coup d'état*, the gendarmerie relapsed into a well-armed repose. The ritual on such occasions is carefully prescribed. A rapid transit through an ante-room, where weary citizens on benches stare enviously at the foreigners thus unfairly privileged to be admitted to the presence without serving a protracted term in purgatory ; a brief interlude in the private secretary's room, where hats are piled in inextricable confusion and someone makes uneasy conversation to their temporary host ; a sudden

## ARGENTINE TANGO

bell ; the summons from within ; the tall, half-open door—

And on a sudden, lo ! the level lake,  
And the long glories of the winter moon.

For there is something Tennysonian about the spaciousness of ministerial rooms in Buenos Aires, those sublime apartments where ministers in cloth-topped boots sit beneath chandeliers beyond belief. At the far end of an immense perspective a tiny figure rises from its desk and makes welcoming gestures barely distinguishable across an intervening ocean of expensive carpet. After a grave ritual of presentations the company is seated in a circle waiting, apparently, for some sepulchral round-game to begin. One does, indeed. For Excellency flings a quick, Spanish question at the nearest player, who deflects it neatly to a neighbour. The game proceeds, until the question has been either answered or transferred, according to the rules, to a player who does not speak Spanish. Then the minister scores one and starts again.

Let it not be thought that guests are ungrateful

## MARCHA

for official courtesies. For their hosts were uniformly charming, and the game frequently deteriorated into friendly intercourse between rational individuals. But the really fascinating thing about it was that each minister seemed to appraise our visit according to his official station. Thus, Foreign Affairs, a courtly figure, viewed his callers as a welcome act of policy ; Public Instruction found distinct traces of education ; but the Interior, official master of the Prefect of Police, detected instantly with departmental aptitude that one of us was missing. Our duty done, we tiptoed out again, drew hats from the wild raffle on the private secretary's table, passed the reproachful glances of envious suppliants in the outer waiting-room, and moved proudly on to the next port of call. Finally, all salutations duly performed, we swept majestically down the big staircase into the sunshine of the Plaza Mayo, where a happy sentry stiffened to the salute. For if we were not a *coup d'état*, we were the next best thing.

2. *Pampero*

Over the city the sky turned black abruptly. Buildings, masts, and funnels were sharply outlined on a leaden ground ; and an unpleasant wind went roaring down the narrow streets. It swept every corner with the uncomfortable thoroughness of a machine-gun barrage ; and there were corners everywhere, since cities built on a rectangular ground-plan consist principally of corners. Then the rain arrived. It came as though it felt it would not be able to stay long and was determined to say as much as possible before it left. But it was soon apparent that it found our company so congenial that it had quite decided, abandoning all other engagements, to spend the day with us ; and all that afternoon it rained with a demented energy. The rain fell as though the air had turned to water ; it came from all directions ; as the wind drove it home, we began to understand why the Professor in *Sylvie and Bruno* had worn umbrellas round his boots as a precaution against horizontal rain. And even when it condescended to rain vertically,

it rained in ways that we had never seen at home, since most of it appeared to come from under-foot. There were occasional defects in the paving of that southern city, and the rain made the most of them. Lakes appeared in fashionable streets ; the pavement outside expensive mansions in the best French style developed uncomfortable watersheds in systems of sub-Alpine complication ; and callers leaping out of cars were drenched from the knees down before they reached the front-door bell. Inside the house a charming hostess eyed her streaming visitors and, pointing to the window where a black sky was still pouring its tropical deluge on Buenos Aires, made them feel quite at home by murmuring politely, "*Como Londres.*"

"Yes," they replied with perfect chivalry, "just like London."

### 3. *Conferencia*

The first plunge was terrifying, since the most hardened public speaker would feel a little hesitation before starting on a round of speeches in a foreign language. Royalty is always capable

## ARGENTINE TANGO

of these linguistic efforts ; and as the embarrassed speaker clutched the little sheet containing his few remarks in Spanish, he was feeling just like royalty—like elderly, female royalty about to open a bazaar. Pronouncing with laborious inaccuracy, he reached the end and was distinctly gratified to read next day that a reporter recognised his speech as Spanish. It must have been a star reporter ; and I cannot doubt that his unusual powers of detection were rewarded by immediate promotion. One of his audience informed the orator with reckless courtesy that his remarks were in the language of Cervantes ; but if that was so, we have been much misled as to Cervantes.

Another circumstance heightened the terrors of his new departure. Public life in Argentina is conducted to a permanent accompaniment of flashlight photography, since newspaper readers expect a full pictorial record of the day's events. One gradually grew accustomed to the magnesium preliminaries of any gathering at which more than five persons were present ; and I subsequently took the liberty of indicating to the

## MARCHA

British Chamber of Commerce that no effort should be spared in order to secure for British suppliers the highly valuable market in this commodity. But its effect on nervous orators is devastating. Habituated to the European practice under which a photograph is taken at the beginning of proceedings and the smoke dissolves long before the business opens, they are completely taken by surprise in Argentina. For a shrewd *criollo* public is not going to be taken in by one of those artfully staged photographs in which the speaker and his chairman stand grinning sheepishly at one another. That may be good enough in the Old World ; but it will never do in Buenos Aires. A more virile race demands an actual record of the speaker in action, and a devoted Press sees that it gets one.

The process is a trifle drastic, since the orator is allowed to open in a delusive calm. His audience is silent ; it may even, he reflects complacently, be listening ; and things are going nicely. Then there is a blinding flash from somewhere close at hand ; a pillar of white smoke rolls silently towards the ceiling ; and

## ARGENTINE TANGO

when he tries to read the next word on his notes, his dazzled eyes refuse their office. This fascinating process is repeated at irregular intervals and without the slightest warning throughout his observations. As he draws obviously towards a close, the bombardment grows more intense. Photographers who have held back their fire until their subject's face assumes the requisite expression of nausea, hasten to discharge their instruments. There is a rapid-fire of flashlights ; synthetic lightnings play round the gathering ; and the chandeliers are veiled in acrid clouds as he resumes his seat.

Most speakers would, I feel, be disconcerted by this form of repartee on the part of their audiences ; and I may be forgiven for recalling one modest triumph over my tormentors. It was in the provinces, and a hospitable university received its guests in more than fitting state. The company was seated on thrones fit for cardinals in a long, panelled hall ; and our embarrassed spokesman groped as usual for the right Castilian word. The salvos of magnesium, he thought, were all discharged ; but as he

## MARCHA

ploughed comfortably through his theme, the dreaded outline of one last photographer appeared upon the outer circle of his vision. For the misguided man was positively crawling straight up the centre gangway towards the platform ; and as he crawled, he held the hateful apparatus of his trade a foot above his head. Trained in a sound Peninsular school, he was evidently holding back his fire until he could see the whites of his adversary's eyes ; and the speaker on the platform watched his serpentine approach with dreadful fascination. Then, for the first time and the last, he took steps in self-defence. For as the distance shortened between the platform and his creeping enemy, the orator put on an unexpected burst of speed, telescoped his argument, and reached his peroration just in time to sit down leaving his enemy completely foiled without a flashlight photograph. That is the sole recorded triumph of a public speaker in Argentina.

But let it not be thought that orators have the slightest cause for complaint. Their path is smooth indeed in a community where the con-

## ARGENTINE TANGO

vention of public speaking insists that their remarks shall be recited from manuscript. How different the hypocrisy of Anglo-Saxons, which demands that we shall thrust an easy hand into a trouser pocket, glance casually at the ceiling, and pretend that all the phrases which we framed with care a week ago were improvised that very moment. But the Argentine convention is the exact opposite. Good manners, it is felt, call for due preparation ; and what better evidence of preparation than a bulky manuscript ? The spectacle of Mr. Balfour strolling in one afternoon to entertain an Oxford audience with a discourse upon æsthetics from a half-sheet of notepaper would have been profoundly shocking to an Argentine university. I have even seen a harassed official of a football club, whose tea was honoured by the President of the Republic, rise from the table with his manuscript in order to assure his Excellency that we were glad to have him with us this afternoon. So there is no excuse for the familiar agony of a protracted pause ; and, to do them justice, public speakers rarely pause in Argentina. Securely based upon

## MARCHA

their manuscript, they go from strength to strength ; and it may be said without disrespect that eloquence in Argentina is about the softest option that I know.

Nor is its reception ever lacking in the highest graces of Castilian courtesy. For I grew accustomed to seeing my own modest readings described in print as a '*linda improvisacion.*' Castilian courtesy, indeed, was occasionally the cause of mild embarrassment to an expectant orator. If there is one thing that a speaker needs—especially if he is to speak to unfamiliar audiences in a strange language—it is precise instructions from the management. But his all too charming hosts were sometimes reluctant to issue orders to a guest or even to disclose the brutal fact that he was required to speak at all ; and he recalls an anguished tour of one university, during which he was completely deaf to its history and blind to its visual attractions in a protracted effort to ascertain by direct question, casual reference, and the intervention of friendly strangers whether he was expected to give a lecture. Each question drew

## ARGENTINE TANGO

a deprecating smile ; each sidelong reference to the absurdity of lectures opened another door upon some wholly irrelevant treasure of that university, until a final door swung open and the speaker found himself upon a platform facing his audience. After that, he never moved outside his bedroom without a manuscript. Folded and safe upon his hip, it gave him all the confidence that bootleggers derive from the comfortable bulge of an automatic. For he was armed against all emergencies ; and at any moment of the day or night he could smile modestly and begin—  
*“Señoras, Señores, Permitidme deciros desde luego cuanto aprecio el privilegio de dirigiros la palabra esta tarde y agradecer lo mejor que puedo vuestra gentil presencia. . . .”*

### 4. *Rector Magnificus*

This is what really happened. After leaving my control the modest anecdote assumed imperial proportions ; and in its final form the President of the Republic himself put in a sublime appearance. For half the Club chose to believe that one of us, when visiting that awful presence,

## MARCHA

caught an unwary boot against a round spittoon which rolled the whole length of a vast, official room, until it came to rest at the very foot which had been placed a year before upon the bowed necks of the Opposition. But that was merely gossip—and until you have spent a month in Buenos Aires, you do not know what gossip is.

Here, therefore, is the meagre truth. Our business that day was not with the President or any minister of state. So no question of high policy arises. Not that our destination lacked anything of dignity, since we were to pay a formal call upon the University. Such confrontations are always slightly embarrassing, since our own universities are oddly impalpable affairs consisting of some Proctors, their bowler-hatted minions, and a Chest. If you doubt what I say, stop anyone in High Street, Oxford, ask him if he can direct you to the University, and observe the puzzled look that creeps into his eyes. But universities abroad are less elusive ; for they reside in stately buildings with distinct postal addresses. They have form and content ; and, being bodies, they have heads—charming and

## ARGENTINE TANGO

articulate heads, on one of which we were to pay a call that afternoon.

We found the building, rang the bell, and threaded the long corridors until we stood before the Rector. That was where it happened ; and the plain truth of it was this. The respectful deputation filed into his room ; and as it filed, their leader announced them by their names and colleges. This modest litany proceeded until the sudden interruption of a clang from somewhere on the floor, where an embarrassed boot had met a bronze utensil. The boot was hurriedly withdrawn ; but the bronze, though not designed for purposes of music, rang like a gong. Devout Burmese might have been excused for taking its rich reverberations for a summons to prayer ; heard at the seaside, it would have called whole boarding-houses home to tea. The Rector paused ; the leader of the deputation blushed ; then, recognising that the errant boot came (like his own) from Balliol, he swiftly introduced its guilty owner as a Cambridge man. What else was there to do ? That is what really happened : the rest is pure exaggeration.

5. *The Exile*

Nothing was further from his mind than to be taken as a text. All that he asked of life at sea was a ship's rail to lean on and a sufficiency of listeners. One at a time would satisfy him ; but some idiosyncrasy demanded that their listening should be done at a most inconvenient hour. For he did his talking after lunch, when most people swallow coffee and dive into deck-chairs in order to disprove the customary charges against coffee. I retain a vivid memory of blue equatorial waters alive with flying-fish and spangled with our spray, of the ship's rail before me and the sure haven of my chair a yard or so behind, of the slow, delicious onset of the afternoon unconsciousness held off relentlessly by his undeviating monologue. Not that his talk lacked interest. If it had, I should not recall him. For he was a walking sermon, of which I cannot altogether catch the precise import.

He was not much to look at. You may see him any day trotting along a City alley to his lunch ; he lunches at the same invariable table

## ARGENTINE TANGO

with three others wholly indistinguishable from himself (except that one of them wears glasses), and after lunch they move to an underground resort for the mixed consolations of coffee, oriental furniture, and dominoes. At night he catches the same train to somewhere down the line ; and every morning he nods briskly to the same unchanging circle in his regular compartment. Yet there he was, attached incongruously to a good cigar and going home to somewhere south of the Equator far beyond the reach of any Redhill train. That was the really startling thing about it all. If he had been merely going on a long journey for his firm, no one need have been surprised ; for Cockney sparrows fly far from Leadenhall Street. But he told us all that he was going home. He said it with a lingering gusto and described with particularity the things that would happen when he got there. He was looking forward to it quite as much as any traveller by the Redhill line ; but his home was manifestly different from any home attainable from Cannon Street. For one thing, his lady did not speak much English ; but as his Portuguese

## MARCHA

was nearly perfect now, that did not make much difference. He thought that fellows who came out to jobs made a great mistake about the language. They only learned enough of it for business purposes ; and all the life they got was playing tennis with each other. That was a narrow sort of life, and what he said was that if you lived in a country, you might just as well live in it. So he had settled down there in a happy home, where he could get practically anything he wanted ; and he was thinking about taking out his papers. He was past military service, and it made a difference about owning real estate. He had quite a little bit of real estate. . . . I said he was a text, of which the proper application escapes me. But he is worth remembering next time you feel inclined to be severe with Englishmen abroad. It is absurd of them, of course, to keep themselves quite so uncompromisingly *to* themselves, to retain suburban snobberies in the shadow of towering mountain ranges, to exchange stale gossip out of last month's illustrated papers by the light of low, tropical moons, to play dull games with one another when

## ARGENTINE TANGO

there is a whole strange and delightful world all round them waiting for them to play in. But when they play there, they are apt to lose ; and if they lose, their country is a little apt to lose them too. For I cannot quite forget that fellow-traveller of mine, whose ample monologue was vastly enjoyable as he looked forward to his comfortable home somewhere below the Equator, a Cockney sparrow lost to England.

### *6. The Missing Moustache*

This is a tale of mystery. No contemporary series is complete without one. But it is not the kind that connoisseurs discuss in solemn conclave once a month ; forensic medicine has little to say to it ; and it does not involve a novel point in toxicology. So perhaps it will appear old-fashioned. For the deed, if I am not mistaken, was done with a blunt instrument.

They all met at the railway-station ; and as the night express steamed out, they were all present and correct. There were about a dozen of them, not counting the camp-followers. That

## MARCHA

expedition was developing an amazing aptitude for gathering up young, attractive females and carrying them round the country in its train. Nobody seemed to disapprove ; their parents positively came down to the station to see their daughters off ; and as those parents seemed to own the station as well as the daughters, who were we to complain ? But since no suspicion rests on any of the ladies, I will not trouble to describe them. For this is not one of those base, commercial mysteries where doubt is cunningly prolonged by the deliberate introduction of unnecessary characters, stray Chinamen, neurotic butlers, and young women with a morbid passion for avoidable arrest by unattractive sleuths. This is a plain tale of strange happenings in a moving train by night.

They were all present, as I said, and their business was to pay a visit to two universities up the line. As the train rumbled through the dark, they dined. They were still dining, as it rumbled a good many kilometres further north—for dining was their *forte*. After dinner they settled comfortably down to games of chance with highly

## ARGENTINE TANGO

complicated rules, playing with one another and with a few members of the great university in the city they had left behind, whose dark moustaches were conspicuous in that clean-shaven company of blonds. I recall one particularly, which was owned by a special friend of mine. His conversation was always pleasant, and it was reassuring to take him with us on our precarious pilgrimage. I retired rather early ; and as I left the parlour-car, he smiled his charming smile beneath the dark moustache. Some hours later, when their games were finished, the remainder of the company retired for the night. (Did I not say that this was a tale of mystery ? And do not all denizens of mysteries, disdaining the unimpressive act of going to bed, invariably 'retire for the night' ?)

The morning came. The train was at a standstill in a thin morning mist, halted at the first of the two cities that we were to visit. A group approached us ; and as it came nearer, I seemed to recognise a charming smile that I had seen before. But where was his moustache ? I looked again. The face was there all right, with the smile duly

## MARCHA

centred in its accustomed place ; but the upper lip that usually crowned it was as bare as the plucked brow of a film actress. It is a little disconcerting to lose moustaches in the night. I began to feel uneasy. And then I saw it in a flash : he had disguised himself. That must be it, of course. By some rare perfection of hospitable ingenuity the dark moustache which had received us so charmingly a week ago at Buenos Aires was now to be an entirely different person and receive us with clean-shaven grace as the University of Córdoba. To-morrow, doubtless, he would grow a beard and bow us into our third port of call in the character of a fraternal delegate from the University of Rosario. It was a scheme of blinding brilliance ; and as a beard would rather suit him, I looked forward to to-morrow.

But the bright edifice collapsed. For he seemed slightly embarrassed when I addressed him by a new name and asked him questions about life at Córdoba. Indeed, he obstinately refused to be another person and denied completely that he proposed to spend the next night in intensive

## ARGENTINE TANGO

agriculture with a view to the production of a beard for Rosario. Preferring commonplace, he said the moving train had caused his razor to desert its office and remove one side of his moustache. That gone, the rest was plainly bound to follow. Would Miss D——y S——s ever have thought of that? But I call everyone to witness that my clues are all in order. I said it was a moving train and a blunt instrument.

### *7. Man of Letters*

His name had formed part of my meagre equipment for the expedition, since I knew him already as a writer of distinction. Indeed, I sampled him one afternoon, as the ship glided on its way towards his native country ; and the results were highly stimulating. For he appeared to deal extensively in that impressive eloquence which is the glory of some kinds of Continental literature. His prose was, if I may term it so without disrespect, highly aerated. Its effect upon the reader was exhilarating, with a slight sensation of internal expansion. (You recall the story of the poor lady who read Victor

## MARCHA

Hugo for a week and suffered from the delusion that she could not pass through doors of ordinary size?) Reading him was like standing on the fringe of a large open-air demonstration and listening to the cheers.

The next phase was a trifle awkward. Once in his country, I bravely exhibited my little fragments of local literary erudition ; but I was pained to notice that his name upon my lips was invariably received with chilly silence. This was disconcerting. Perhaps I had pronounced it wrong. So I tried other versions ; but though his name was different each time, the silence was the same. Then I made discreet enquiries, from which I ascertained that his political career had certain features which had somehow dimmed his popularity. That was odd, too, because they were just the features which in England would have ensured him the commanding status of a popular idol. I mean, the fact that in a crowded life he had managed to belong to most parties would have been quite a help to him at home. Take Mr. Churchill. Has he not passed across the scene disseminating loyalties and gathering a

## ARGENTINE TANGO

devoted public ? Or the Prime Minister. For who can doubt that his recollections, when they appear in print, will find eager readers among the parties he has left behind as well as in the stately homes of England ? But foreigners are so logical ; and that changeful author's name uniformly failed to stir enthusiasm.

Quite undeterred, I called upon him. He was a charming person of great sagacity and (as his prose had led me to expect) unusual eloquence. For he addressed me at some length in terms appropriate to a large public gathering. As Mr. de Valera had once done the same, I knew the right way to behave and remained demurely seated, breaking at intervals into respectful cheers. But his discourse was far superior to anything of which Mr. de Valera was ever capable, even when the records of that melancholy gramophone were new. My host was brilliantly illuminating upon his country's history ; and it was only when he verged on current politics that his bias of the moment became unduly visible. For his intense loyalty to the government of the day impelled him to rise from his chair exclaiming with a

## MARCHA

raised forearm, “*Vive le Général.*” It echoed round the little room ; and as the echoes died away, one was quite irresistibly reminded of the first comparison suggested by his prose. It was all in the key of Victor Hugo—of a more judicious Hugo, who had chosen the other side and was not under the sad necessity of declaiming to awed visitors in the depressing exile of seaside lodgings at Guernsey.

### 8. *Asado*

“*¡ Un pasito*  
*Due pasito*  
*Eco la ranchera ! . . .*”

A cheerful baritone sang the words manfully with a thick up-country accent, and the accompaniment swung gaily into the bouncing measure of a country dance. If there is any lilt on earth that is more companionable, it is unknown to me ; and the *ranchera* jigged gaily on to the triumphant uproar of its final bar. But that was afterwards.

We were in the open air, of course, and the breeze that moved the leaves breathed with the quiet confidence of breezes that have the whole

## ARGENTINE TANGO

breadth of the Pampa to breathe in. Our hosts had promised us a treat. We were to have something that we could never hope to have outside the Argentine—a real *criollo* roast. Had we had one before? They always asked us that; and, being wise, we always answered that we had not. Then they would give us one—a real *asado* of the old days—and they went off to issue comprehensive orders for meat, music, and red wine. We always asked for one; our hosts always acceded on the strict understanding that it was the first that we had ever had; and we were innocent of perjury, as they were never quite the same. That is the charm of an *asado*. Sometimes it was a lamb eaten in the deep silence of the Pampa with that contentment which comes after fifteen miles in the saddle at a slow gallop. Once the tall Andes looked over our shoulders as we were eating; and once we ate oxen roasted whole in the shade of great eucalyptus trees not far from the broad waters of the Paraná, and nothing was allowed to happen until a respected local resident had kissed all the ladies present because he always did and it was a point of honour with him that they

## MARCHA

should fly shrieking. The full total of our *asados* is beyond numbering ; for they succeeded one another, each certified to be the very first that we had ever tasted ; and what remains is a blurred, happy memory of composite occasions, of gracious afternoons where smiling ladies gave us far too much to eat and poured wine into glasses far too big for wine, and in the background somebody was always singing.

Song is the overture and the accompaniment of an *asado*. Two figures casually seated under a tree launch suddenly into the stamping measure of a *zamba* ; and as the deep chords twang, they sing an interminable song about a lovely lady and a good deal of money. For the lyric fancy of Argentina dwells happily upon *mujer* and *plata* ; and the simple air winds in and out, as the hero of the song makes his fortune and achieves his *criolla linda*. You may sit and listen to it in the shade ; or you may stroll a yard or so to watch the meat roasting on the ground, hoisted upon its irons and turned by a formidable figure with a tanned *gaucho* face. As you watch it, you feel very far from home. Perhaps it is the sight of the

## ARGENTINE TANGO

big knife at the smiling *gaucho*'s belt, or the strange trees, or the tall llamas grazing quietly in the next field. The singers quicken suddenly, and the next song goes to the marching beat of a *chacarera*. The leader announces another verse with the long-drawn ' *Segunda-a*' ; and you know that home is far away. But a hospitable house is near. That is a comforting feature of alfresco meals in Argentina. The heroes of picnics in Europe take a perverse delight in long, uncomfortable journeys with bulky impedimenta, which land the party in remote localities where it is quite impossible to repair grave omissions in equipment. The missing knife, the lost cucumber, the forgotten salt—these are the commonplaces of picnics at home. But Argentina, with the caution born of great distances, prefers to lunch outside the house with everything near at hand ; and an *asado* may sometimes be just a meal taken in the open air instead of in the dining-room.

But what a meal ! The roast is ready now, and the big knife comes into play. Attendant cavaliers race for appropriate morsels for their ladies, since even ladies eat more out of doors. Then, the

## MARCHA

demands of chivalry once satisfied, they turn with terrifying gusto to their own requirements ; and what the male requires when stimulated by fresh air, red wine, and music, only survivors can recall. Lifelong vegetarians have been detected racing one another for the kidney ; and when lunch is over, there is nothing left but a few smouldering embers. But the music starts again. This time it is a bouncing country dance ; and the big voice, invigorated by a hearty lunch, announces the *ranchera* with a thundering ' *Aura*.' The cheerful air pounds gaily on, and the friendly baritone intones the chorus with an up-country accent :

“ *Adelante*  
  *Co lu baile*  
  *Cuesto si qu'e creoyo*  
  *Ahora somo todo gauchos*  
  *T nada mase . . . lo mecor.*”



*CORTE*



## GAY CITY

ITS fame, as you may say, precedes it. For intending visitors to Buenos Aires know all about it long before they get there ; and if they do not, other people who have never been there are prepared to tell them all about it. I once passed a music-hall in Walthamstow which advertised a delirious entertainment called *The Follies of Buenos Aires* ; and that bright promise to the mournful denizens of Tottenham and the adjacent suburbs is typical of the position held by Buenos Aires in the affections of mankind. When Juan de Garay's landing-place was named El Puerto de Santa Maria de Buenos Aires, we cannot doubt that it was intended as a double tribute to religion and the climate, conveying (as the guide-book says in its incomparable prose) “ a well-founded allusion to the salubrity of the situation.” But that lovely name has somehow

## ARGENTINE TANGO

acquired a distinct flavour of naughtiness. Its reputation, by some odd chain of association, is rather for gaiety than tonic breezes ; and when intending visitors announce Buenos Aires as their destination, they will receive more knowing looks than congratulations on their choice of so bracing a resort. Historians have not determined precisely when the change occurred. But there is no evidence of undue anxiety among the female relatives of General Whitelocke, when he was ordered to the River Plate in 1807 ; and it is not recorded that the young Darwin was greeted with black looks at breakfast, when he announced that the *Beagle* would probably be making a short stay at Buenos Aires. So the change is probably of recent date. (The tango, it may be remarked, was unknown to the outer world before 1900.) But whenever it occurred, the fact is quite undoubted, and visitors to Buenos Aires land in high hopes or nervous anticipation, according to their points of view.

The incoming liner ploughs the yellow waters of the River Plate, and they strain their ears for

## CORTE

the first throb of tango bands. But there is no music in the North Basin ; the waterfront of Buenos Aires looks very much like any other waterfront of a great port. Perhaps the buildings are more dignified ; but dignity was the last thing that they were looking for at Buenos Aires. A slight sense of injury invades them, as the tall façades slip by. Why, they wonder, should the fancy of Walthamstow be stirred by Buenos Aires Follies, if there is nothing there but dignified façades ? Any town, of course, is bound to have its public buildings. Law courts must sit somewhere, and Government departments require impressive premises to lose their letters in. But there can be few cities in the world which carry dignity in architecture to the impressive lengths of Buenos Aires. Almost any one of twenty monumental buildings might be the General Post Office ; potential Law Courts abound on every hand ; and the solemn frontage of the Opera might be the National Assembly, while by a natural compensation the Assembly looks very like a palace of the arts—an expensive palace of the more solemn arts. But you will search in vain for the

## ARGENTINE TANGO

lighter arts in Buenos Aires. That is the great disillusion.

When hopeful visitors in opera hats leave their hotels in search of entertainment, they find a most restricted choice. There is the Opera, of course, where they may be regaled on solid European fare exported in large packing-cases from Milan, Vienna, and Covent Garden. But there is nothing Argentine at the Colón except the chatter in the *foyer*; and one had not come six thousand miles in order to enjoy an entertainment that could be taken just as well in Bow Street. For the rest, there may be a Spanish company, a revue shipped bodily from Montmartre (was not the *furore* of *Ba-ta-clan* so devastating that the *foyer* of the Opera was completely denuded of males and its deserted damsels left complaining?), or a French *comédienne*. But where, in all this galaxy of international talent, is Argentina? That was the voice that we had come so far to hear; and it was nowhere to be heard, unless we were prepared to unravel obscure political allusions in a few topical revues or listen for it on the mournful air of a depressing *cabaret*,

## CORTE

where departing visitors were pressed to stay a little longer by a despairing management on the ground that something was really just about to happen. Could this be the Buenos Aires of our dreams, where life was a mad whirl of Follies and the tango throbbed from dawn till dusk ?

Yet Buenos Aires has a voice that you may catch, if you listen hard. Somewhere in a gallery above that dismal dancing-floor the violins of an incomparable band beat to a slow pulse of music ; a strange air creeps across the throbbing undertone of strings ; and above the music a deep voice utters its complaint. It is an education in the tango to have heard *Porqué* at Ta-ba-ris. Or a wilderness of dreary vaudeville is brightened by the sudden interruption of a marching air sung in a hoarse Spanish voice, a woman's voice that rises to a wailing minor or falls to a reproachful bass, as the air marches to its close. That is the voice of Buenos Aires ; and it is the world's misfortune that outside Buenos Aires it is rarely heard. For the tinkling insignificance by which most of us understand a tango would not live for

## ARGENTINE TANGO

five minutes in the city of its birth, where a frantic audience will hold up the entire programme as it cheers the latest tango with the full connoisseurship of a ring-side audience in Seville appraising a new *espada*. Almost all that Europe knows of it is in the languid mode that floated on the air of tango teas in distant days before the War, a hesitating air to which ladies in large feathered hats might sway becomingly with *beaux* in morning-coats. But the contemporary tango moves with a smarter step ; the sharp precision of its time cuts like a knife ; and, reared on this exact foundation, a haunting air marches unhesitatingly from the sudden drama of its opening bar to the defiance of its close. That is the tango as it may be heard in Buenos Aires—sung, danced, or orchestrated—and it will suffice for the voice of a great city. Not that it is a conspicuously gay voice, as gaiety is understood in Western Europe ; for it has all the minor melancholy of Spain set to a marching measure.

Gaiety in Buenos Aires is rather apt to crop out in unusual places. Few cities express their more exuberant modes in taxicabs. But nothing more

## CORTE

sumptuous than a Buenos Aires taxi was ever dreamt of by a successful negro gambler. The length, the breadth, the speed, the cushions, the window-glass engraved with luscious spirals appropriate to a Chicago gunman's hearse compose a whole of unexampled sumptuousness ; and a sardonic contrast propels these Juggernauts at speed (for Argentine automobilism is nothing if not spirited) down narrow alleys planned by Spanish forefathers to be traps for shade in the noonday heat, their silence quite unbroken except by the click of an occasional mule. This superposition of a modern city upon an old Colonial ground-plan has strange results. The square blocks of buildings, which Spanish settlements borrowed from the Roman camp, may be multiplied with ease into the rectangular grid-iron of streets that marks the very latest thing in American town-planning. But if the streets between the houses remain of the same width as was required for traffic when gentlemen in spurs came trotting into Buenos Aires, there will be difficulties. A brave attempt to ease the situation and broaden the roadway has been made by shaving

## ARGENTINE TANGO

off the pavements, with the sad consequence that local pedestrians lead a hunted life. For single file is a compulsory formation on the sidewalks of Buenos Aires ; and even in single file foot-passengers are haunted by grave preoccupations, since the trams overlap the pavement by a foot or so, and there is every chance, each time you stop to gaze incautiously into a shop-window, that a tram thundering by within an inch of your coat-tails will scoop you off the pavement on its ample cow-catcher and bear you off into the outer suburbs. That fear is always present to the stranger's mind ; it shadows him as he goes wearily down the interminable length of B. Mitre ; and the only freedom that he knows is at the happy hour when street-lamps shine out in triple clusters above Florida and that delightful street becomes (as it was meant to be) a *souk* left by the Moors in some old Spanish town for all the world to pace at ease between the little shops in the cool evening.

But, that relief apart, life in Buenos Aires seems always rather hunted. For when its visitors are not actually hunted by its traffic,

## CORTE

they are pursued by its inexhaustible benevolence, by the alarming volume of their own engagements and the impossibility of being in three places at the same moment or even of getting to one of them in time. As I turn once again the blotted pages of an old engagement-book, the scenes come crowding back—Florida choked with evening traffic, the rain streaming down, the pavements gleaming, and the Jockey Club five blocks ahead, where a kind host is still expecting one to dine with him at half-past eight, although the time is now a little after half-past nine ; the scramble out of a lecture-hall in Tucuman, when an unmannerly lecturer hustled his own audience with rare courtesy because he had precisely seven minutes in which to get down to the station and catch a train for Hurlingham, if he was to be in time for dinner ; the spacious ease of a stroll in the *Zoológico*, where no traffic could pursue you down the little curving paths and you could watch the condors or go for penny rides on llamas ; innumerable rendezvous at Harrods (name of homely sound, but cooking of good foreign quality) ; the great

## ARGENTINE TANGO

mansions on the Avenida Alvear flashing past, as you drove out to dine in far Belgrano or went racing at Palermo on Sunday afternoons. That was, I think, the crown and zenith of all luxury in Argentina, where respectful servitors stood waiting at your elbow to collect your bets and, if you won, your winnings were delivered on a salver—no scramble in the Ring, no queue at a barred window, but your winnings gravely presented on a salver at your imperial seat, from which you could command the whole length of the course. Beyond that point there is no luxury of which the human mind is capable. It must surely be what Hakluyt was thinking of when his heroic mariners went in search of “a great towne called El Dorado.” There might be people of expensive tastes in Cathay, “the beautiful people eating with knives of golde”; but if they had any sense, they would have put their gold to better use and spent it on the sober luxury of the Jockey Club stand at Palermo, where your winnings come to you on salvers. So that friendly city stands in my memory with its long, narrow streets, where you sit down to

## CORTE

dinner after ten and never go to bed. And it is not, one feels, for nothing that it was named Buenos Aires, since the airs are admirable and every air a tango.

## PARTY-WALL

THE problem, if there is one, is distinctly baffling, since it relates to two communities of charming people. Most race problems are simplified for onlookers because they generally deal with two sets of human beings, one of which is obviously detestable. In such cases our prejudices, at any rate, know which way to run ; and the problem is gradually reduced to finding means of keeping the two groups apart or of assimilating them by improving the nastier of the two. (The drastic method of total elimination preferred by the late Sultan Abdul Hamid in the unfortunate instance of the Armenians may be discarded.) But in the present instance the problem is presented by two delightful groups inhabiting a single country—and even, in the majority of cases, a single city. I am fully justified in terming them delightful, because I have dined with them too often to think of them

## CORTE

otherwise ; and I should be charmed to dine with all of them again, whether by summons to wear a black tie behind the trim hedgerows of Hurlingham at 8 p.m., or by a more verbose reminder *para recordar que el Dr. — y Señora tendrán el placer de recibir al Señor y Señora Philip Guedalla el Miércoles 18 a las 9 $\frac{1}{2}$  p.m.*

Indeed, it was while dining with them that the problem first occurred to me. For those pleasant evenings, which broke up towards one o'clock under the reproachful eye of a hostess, who felt that things could not have been going well for guests to leave so early, suggested grave reflections. They were so enjoyable that social life in Buenos Aires seemed at first sight to present residents with opportunities for endless variety —sometimes an evening among Argentines, sometimes with their own fellow-countrymen from England ; little parties where the leading language would be Spanish without prejudice to a few British couples, and nights when English hostesses would ask their friends to meet some Argentines. But the odd thing about it was that I seemed never to be present at one of these

## ARGENTINE TANGO

charming international occasions for which the mixed population of Buenos Aires presented, as I thought, such admirable opportunities ; and it was gradually borne in upon me that the reason for my missing them was that they practically never happened. For it is the social paradox of Buenos Aires that it contains two friendly and civilised communities which work together all day long and very rarely meet at night.

The friendship of Englishmen and Argentines is a commonplace which has made possible the history and development of Argentina. No British visitor can fail to notice it, since it is an odd sensation for an Englishman abroad to be loved for himself alone. There is something rare and startling in the sight of them being honoured and esteemed on the simple ground of being English. I do not mean that incoming steamers at Buenos Aires are greeted by ecstatic deputations which lead the British passengers ashore with garlands round their necks. There are few flowers at the North Basin. Yet the flowers, though invisible, are there ; for Argentina has a strong prejudice in favour of English-

## CORTE

men. The consequence is that British visitors to Argentina know themselves to be something more (or less) than mere foreigners. For on the continent of Europe we feel ourselves to be one hundred per cent. aliens ; and there are circles in the United States where we are painfully aware of being foreigners of a percentage of one hundred and ten (or thereabouts). But in the Argentine we feel with every breath we draw that we are not more than sixty or seventy per cent. alien to the country and that, if we are foreigners at all, we are its favourite foreigners. That is a position of rare privilege inherent in the strange history of Argentina, a mixed skein in which many British strands are woven ; but it serves to emphasise still further the social paradox of Buenos Aires.

For you will find Englishmen and Argentines together in each other's offices. But how often do you find them in each other's homes ? I ask the question with a due sense of responsibility ; and I know the answer, since a visitor from overseas was privileged to dine on both sides of the party-wall. The truth is that after office hours

## ARGENTINE TANGO

the two communities lead almost entirely separate lives. Their men may play a little golf together ; there is an annual Rugger match between them ; and a mixed lunch-party in town is quite a possible event. But how often do they dine together in each other's homes ? That is the real test of intimacy ; and it is one that Anglo-Argentine relations entirely fail to satisfy. It is wholly devoid of political or economic significance. It does not in the least detract from the reality of Britain's contribution to the growth of the Republic or from England's need of Argentina's products. Whether Mr. A. of the Insurance Company receives an invitation to dine with the Señora de B. or not, Great Britain and Argentina will continue to be economically complementary to one another. For in a world of cut-throat competition there is no point discernible at which a British interest is adverse to an Argentine interest. Indeed, since Argentina contains more British capital than any British Dominion except India, it would not be easy to invent one. Besides, each country produces what the other needs ; and all

## CORTE

of us may pray with perfect patriotism for the prosperity of the other, since a more prosperous Britain will eat more beef, whilst a more prosperous Argentina will need more British manufactures.

These high matters are wholly unaffected by the social problem. But they make it all the stranger that contacts between the two partners in the Argentine adventure should be so comparatively restricted. The wise historian, since moral judgments went out of fashion with Carlyle, does not apportion praise and blame. He merely records facts ; and quite the most conspicuous fact to any new-comer is Hurlingham. Here, as the name indicates, is something wholly British. Seventeen miles out of Buenos Aires a charming suburb clusters round an admirable club. It has its games, its dances, and its life ; and its contacts with Buenos Aires are almost confined to the successful effort of its male population to catch the morning train to town or lunch on Saturdays at Harrods. One begins to wonder whether the prim British instinct of keeping oneself *to* oneself dictated this retreat.

## ARGENTINE TANGO

Was Hurlingham the cause of the surprising segregation of the races? Or was it just a consequence? Did the egg precede the chicken, or did the hen come first? And which of the two is Hurlingham?

It is a fact, at any rate. But there may be other facts. Before one breaks in thunder on the heads of Englishmen (always a congenial exercise for English writers) with a fine denunciation of their gross insularity, narrow prejudice, and general ignorance, it is just worth examining the social record of the sister community in Argentina. Here, as well, certain impediments seem to preclude domestic intimacy. For Argentina is Spain's daughter; and Spain has inhibitions about the home which render the admission of strangers a rare and guarded privilege. There are so many points at which the Argentine has progressed far beyond his slow-moving Spanish ancestor that one can hardly doubt that he will finally outgrow the narrow limits of the old secluded Spanish home. For instance, the stern rule of the *duenna* is being rapidly destroyed by his younger daughters' taste for golf; since few

## CORTE

duennas, even if they survived the drive to San Andrés in the two-seater, are equal to a walk round eighteen holes. So the Señorita golfs all unguarded ; and one Spanish castle, whose frowning bartizans looked down on generations of escorted daughters, has capitulated. Can it be doubted that the secluded Spanish home, which is ten times more a castle than anything dreamt of by the most self-sufficient Englishman, must go the same way in time ? For it will be manifestly ridiculous to guard the Señorita's evenings against the very strangers with whom she has been playing golf all day ; and when that discovery dawns upon her anxious parents, their hospitality will be as free at their town-house as it already is on their estancia. That is the queer feature of this limitation, since it has little effect in the freer air of country life in Argentina. This circumstance, I think, betrays its urban origins in Spain ; and if it has succumbed already to the breezes of the Pampa, it cannot be very long before it breathes its last in Buenos Aires.

Those are the facts—the British suburb and the Spanish home—that make up the strange

## ARGENTINE TANGO

party-wall by which the social edifice of Buenos Aires is divided. Who can say which of them came first? Perhaps the Englishman, slightly rebuffed by the barred windows of the Spanish home, took refuge in his suburb. Perhaps the Argentine was faintly offended by the seclusion of the British suburb and went proudly home to add a few bars to his windows. But how can a grateful guest of both attempt to hold the scales?

## FAINT THOUGHTS ON A DISTANT PROSPECT OF A DICTATOR

AS he was to be my first Dictator, I felt a mild, but pleasant, thrill. All my more enterprising contemporaries scored their Dictator long ago. You remember it, of course—their visit to the great Palazzo, the busy ante-rooms alive with secretaries, and then the summons to the presence ; the big, empty room with a writing-desk about a hundred yards away, the singularly perfect rose that was its only decoration, and impending over it that pair of brooding eyes ; the swift movement at the visitor's approach, the baby panther he was playing with stuffed hurriedly into a drawer, and those eyes advancing down the room like a pair of headlights, to be dimmed by the courtesy of the road on approaching the oncoming traffic into a flash of amiability ; the iron grasp and then the conversation, always the same conversation, about

## ARGENTINE TANGO

the inability of anyone to govern anything unless somebody governs them ; six minutes of this inspiring gospel, followed by enquiries after Hitler and Sir Oswald Mosley ; then the dismissal with an electric stare, a signed photograph, and a sudden gift of the rose (to ladies) and the panther cub (to gentlemen). It is a standardised affair ; but visitors who endure it have scored their Dictator. More negligent of my opportunities, I had omitted it completely, unless an interview with Mr. de Valera counted. I had not even seen General Primo de Rivera the last time that I was in Madrid. So my score until that morning was a perfect blank. That was why there was a thrill about the approaching interview.

It was always mildly thrilling to penetrate the guarded precincts of Government House ; and as one penetrated further, they grew still more guarded. One felt with a delicious *frisson*, as we walked down the final corridor under a close scrutiny, that it would be highly injudicious to insert an artless hand into a trouser pocket ; and two figures in the last ante-room of all compelled

## CORTE

a deeper awe. For those broad-shouldered gentlemen in unimpressive ready-mades were the embodiment of force itself ; their ill-fitting suits clothed the basis of all government. They were not tall, but their surprising breadth made up anything they lacked in height. The hair upon their heads was smooth and dull and black, and their impassive Indian faces had been cast in some material more durable than flesh : a blow with a steel rail, one felt, would leave its mark upon the rail. These two plain-clothes men in bronze were the keepers of the gate, the very last line of defence.

After that, no Dictator could hope to be impressive, unless he happened to breathe fire or strangled anacondas in the intervals of dealing with his correspondence. Our host, indeed, was quite the reverse—a darkish military man with kindly manners and a charming smile. He did not glare ; there were no panther cubs about. He wore uniform because he was a soldier by profession rather than because Act II seemed to require a uniform ; and consequently he looked like a soldier and unlike the Captain-General

## ARGENTINE TANGO

of a fire-brigade. His talk was military, and I found myself diffidently embarked upon a rather technical discussion of Wellington's campaign in the Pyrenees. His manner was authoritative with the slight touch of brusqueness that comes from training with the German army ; but, unlike his teachers, he did not forget to smile. Indeed, it was not easy to remember that the kindly little man in front of us, who smiled so pleasantly beneath a drooping black moustache, had made a revolution just a year before. True, it had been an easy revolution. But that was just because the General had marched on Buenos Aires with swift efficiency, when his long columns came marching down the broad avenue towards the city, as his aeroplanes dropped reassuring leaflets on the roaring streets. There had been one awkward moment, when nobody knew if the troops lining the big railway embankment would fire into him or not ; and machine-gunners had raked his leading unit cruelly at the street-corner by our hotel. That had been just a year ago ; and here he was, an unpretentious little man talking comfortably to visitors about the campaign in the

## CORTE

Pyrenees. He might not put on Roman airs ; but one felt that a talk with General Uriburu should count as two visits to the Duce.

His politics are no concern of mine. But he was what not all Dictators are, brave and unpretentious. For I have seen him, conspicuous in the red band on his General's cap, shouldering his way through a football crowd. And how many Dictators of the familiar pattern ramble as cheerfully as he did among the racegoers on Sunday afternoons ? After meeting him, I was quite glad that I had waited till I got to Buenos Aires to score my first Dictator ; and unless the others are prepared to be as amiable as he was (which seems, from their press photographs, unlikely), I positively shall not meet any more.

## GRAN CAMPEON

THERE could hardly be much doubt about it. A glance at any of the newspapers that morning was enough to tell you who was the leading figure of the day in Buenos Aires. For his name in streamers an inch high ran straight across the top of every front page ; photographs of him from all angles were richly supplemented by descriptive matter and by more photographs of scenes associated with his early life. His press-cuttings, which would have bulged an album, were uniformly respectful ; and the published comments concentrated mainly on the fact that it was years since a white bull had won the championship of the *Rural*.

That position is, beyond all doubt, the proudest that the country offers after the Presidency of the Republic. Indeed, it is uncertain whether

## CORTE

the *gran campeon* ranks after him : the point has not been settled, as they never dine together. But the prize bull of the year at once becomes a national figure. For Argentina takes stock-breeding seriously ; and the fact is one that her competitors would do well to remember. For the spring Show of the *Rural* at Buenos Aires combines the social eminence of Ascot with the technical excitements of the Motor Show. Everyone is up in town for it ; the opening is a State ceremony at which the lives of Governments are often gauged by the demeanour of the crowd ; the judges are shipped out six thousand miles from England ; and the results are scrutinised with a solicitude which other countries reserve for Test Matches. Indeed, when rival owners spend as many thousands as competing Argentine *estancieros* upon importing the pick of the world's stock, it is not surprising that their offspring is impressive ; and it is not surprising either that it is not easily displaced in the markets of the world. For it will take more than an Imperial gesture to find a substitute for Argentine cattle. The proof, to put it brutally, is in the eating. You cannot

## ARGENTINE TANGO

create quality by resolution of an Imperial Conference. That is a thing of slower growth. It comes from lavish spending on the finest stock and from the deep pastures of the Pampa ; and as you perambulate the alleys of the Buenos Aires Show, the results stir softly in the straw beside you—portentous sheep encased in wool like huge crustaceans in their carapaces, pigs of unusual silhouette, and gigantic cattle of all shapes and sizes. An appraising crowd strolls with you ; for it knows that Argentina depends more upon those quadrupeds than upon guns. That is a simple fact which helps to keep the New World saner than the Old.

The crowds wander down the alleys, lingering to stare at the competing monsters. But the largest crowd of all at any hour of the day is drawn by the prize bull. All hours are the same to him, as he breathes softly in his awe-inspiring nest ; for he is comfortably embedded in an enormous cube of fodder. At intervals, his respectful guardian prevails on him to rise ; and then we see that he is the size of a small locomotive, but more lovable, as (unlike many loco-

## CORTE

motives) his white bulk is suffused with pink. But he is mostly to be seen massively recumbent in that block of fodder. There is something singularly impressive about a residence that is entirely edible. More than a touch, indeed, of millionaire's dementia informs the whole conception ; and one begins to wonder why no successful Wall Street operator has ever built himself a house of *foie gras*. But the whole life of the *gran campeón* is very like a millionaire's. For that bulk represents a vast accumulation of nourishment and leisure ; and strange stories are told of his favourite delicacies. The tastes of a prize bull are often ruinous to purchasers ; and as you gaze at the mild-eyed bulk, it is not easy in Buenos Aires to repress the thought that the huddled masses round the docks would be better for a little of the same care. I remember at the end of one delightful evening a lady who insisted prettily that one must be very firm with these Russian agitators. But urban housing in some quarters leaves you sometimes with the rebellious thought that there is little need to be a Russian

## ARGENTINE TANGO

in order to become an agitator. Those are some of the reflections that rose on an uninstructed mind, as the *gran campeon* munched imperturbably under the respectful eyes of Buenos Aires.

*PASEO CON GOLPE*



## LE DRAPEAU DE LA FRANCE

A VISITOR to the New World soon learns to recognise the distinguished Frenchman as a common object of the seashore. Every tide, it seems, brings one to land ; and when he lands, the subsequent phenomena follow an almost uniform course. He has a good deal to say to the reporters about the *sœurs latines*, those sister nations which preserve in their relations a degree of acrimony familiar in so many families. But six thousand miles from Paris it is hardly necessary to complicate the issue by alluding to the painful fact that the sisterly relations between France and Italy are not unlike those which prevailed between Goneril and Regan, while both of them reserve for Spain the profound contempt felt by her elder sisters for Cordelia. The main thing is to cling hard to a shadowy conception of sympathy between Latins and to discharge faithfully the mission imposed upon all French diplo-

## ARGENTINE TANGO

macy, official and unofficial—*porter haut le drapeau de la France.*

This note is bravely held throughout his subsequent pronouncements—in the great *conférence* before the Faculty of Arts and Letters, which ended with that noble image of the Latin torch passing from hand to hand along the shores of the Mediterranean until it crossed the ocean to be re-kindled in Tierra del Fuego ; in his less formal utterances, which would leave casual hearers under the impression that, if Argentina was not colonised by Frenchmen, Paris was colonised by Argentines ; and in his final message, which returns once more to the familiar theme of the three Latin Graces. For the French, elsewhere so intelligent, appear to be deserted by their sense of humour when making speeches in South America. Even the slow smile of Anatole France forgot to flicker in his beard, as he began a lecture in Buenos Aires by solemnly apostrophising “*l’union intellectuelle des enfants de Molière et des héritiers de Cervantès. Frères et amis latins. . .*” The note was still more crudely struck by the judicious M. Hanotaux, who alluded to the whole sub-

## PASEO CON GOLPE

continent as "*une plus grande France.*" But politicians have a professional aptitude for letting cats out of bags; and there can be no doubt that, in abandoning the Latin gambit and substituting for its unconvincing draperies the undraped figure of Marianne, M. Hanotaux was speaking from the heart. For the whole tendency of French intellectual penetration in South America is towards simple annexation of its mind. The French objective, as one writer modestly confessed so far back as the Second Empire, is "a colony without a flag"; and the good work has gone so far that M. Poincaré concludes triumphantly, after studying the works of a Peruvian who lives in Paris, that "America, Spanish and Portuguese by origin, is becoming French by culture."

If it is not, it cannot be for any lack of trying on the part of ardent French missionaries. For the lecture platforms of a continent ring with their eloquence, and no literary gathering is quite complete without their compliments to authors whom they have not read. But if their mission is to be completely successful, certain suppressions are essential. For one thing, no Frenchman ever felt

## ARGENTINE TANGO

the smallest respect for anybody who was not a Frenchman too. It is significant, indeed, that French flattery of South Americans can devise no higher compliment to pay them than to call them French. For that is the meaning of the whole Latin gambit ; and even the latest French visitor to Buenos Aires makes his bow to her with the slightly devastating tribute that she is very like Marseilles. The bland condescension which the comparison implies is inconceivable in anyone except a Frenchman : what Englishman would dream that anybody would feel gratified by hearing his capital compared to Liverpool ? But the French spirit, less diffident, goes gaily round the world distributing patents of French nobility to persons and places with ample titles of their own. There is an innocence about the whole proceeding which disarms unfriendly criticism. Yet this gay recognition of French qualities in the most unpromising material conceals a deep conviction that there are no other qualities worth having. That is the fundamental error which disqualifies the bright intellect of France for international contacts. It is essen-

## PASEO CON GOLPE

tially parochial, with a parish bounded on the west by Neuilly and on the north by Batignolles. Its reading is exclusively Parisian, its highest flights of humour reserved for persons who commit the egregious blunder of speaking French with a Belgian accent ; and when it travels, it surveys the world from the windows of a French *wagon-lit*. Even M. Paul Morand, that literary Lindbergh, leaves his grateful readers with the comfortable impression that he is never really far away from a smart quarter in what is for him the only city on earth. For however far the most accomplished Frenchman travels, his intellect is never far from Paris ; and the fountains in the Place de la Concorde are the parish pump of the most parochial village in the world.

That is why most Frenchmen view foreigners with mild disdain ; and that disdain of theirs must be suppressed before they can hope to be in the least effective as missionaries in foreign countries. There was an instructive instance whilst I was in Buenos Aires. One of the most charming ladies in that town of charming ladies almost wept tears of rage because an eminent

## ARGENTINE TANGO

French man of letters had begun a course of lectures with the graceful observation that Argentines were well-known in Paris restaurants as the patrons who never trouble to pick up their change. This airy identification of a whole nation with its vulgarians seemed for some reason to distress her, although I did my best for France by explaining that there is no higher category of praise known to the French mind than that reserved for persons who leave cash about for Frenchmen. But my efforts were, I fear, largely wasted ; and the French cause in Argentina was gravely prejudiced by that Parisian's bland inability to see any Argentines beyond the *rastas* he had seen from his corner table in some restaurant at home.

This mood of faint superiority must be suppressed, if French propaganda is to have its full effect. Indeed, in Argentina the situation appears to call for still more drastic suppressions. For it would be fatal to the Latin legend to admit a number of disturbing facts, by which its symmetry is gravely menaced. Thus, it is unfortunate (but true) that British policy made possible

## PASEO CON GOLPE

the dawn of Argentine independence and that British energy has played a leading part in the development of Argentina. But as this admission would completely mar the Latin theory, M. Morand bravely turns a blind eye to half the history of Argentina, exclaiming : “*Ce qui a créé l'Argentine, ce n'est pas l'Espagnol, c'est le Basque, c'est l'Allemand, c'est le Français, c'est l'Italien. . . .*”

The catalogue, it will be observed, breaks off abruptly before the British name is reached ; and there is something sublime in this determination to appropriate the credit, to rewrite the history of Argentina, substituting Frenchmen in the more favourable rôles. One quite expects to read on the next page that M. Georges Canning, whose ministry was the leading glory of the reign of Louis XVIII, called the New World into being, or that Almirante Brown was a Breton sailor ; and it might be just as well to add that French capital built nearly all the railways. But perhaps the intrepid author did not think of that.

In any case, the French campaign for the spiritual annexation of South America enjoys the powerful assistance of one local impulse. For

## ARGENTINE TANGO

the glamour of Paris is widely felt. A thoughtful student writes with a good deal of truth that “when Latin Americans go abroad, Paris is their Mecca ; France their second patria.” French models, which delight their ladies, satisfy their authors too ; and there is something almost touching in the confession of Rubén Darío, a writer of real distinction, that it was his dream to write in French. This complex, to which authors of other nationalities are occasionally subject, seems slightly unworthy ; for it belongs to a mood of frank inferiority. However grand the tricolour may be, it is a shade ignoble to haul down one’s flag and run up someone else’s ; and there is something uninspiring in the spectacle of little coteries of foreign literary men writing books in Paris with a vague hope that somebody will take them for French authors. But the mood prevails, because there has always seemed to be something vaguely dashing about literary work performed in Paris, a delicious hint of naughtiness that creeps into Darío’s confession :

“ *mi esposa*  
*es de mi tierra : mi querida de Paris.*”

## PASEO CON GOLPE

That appeal is almost irresistible, and South America has made no effort to resist it. The nostalgia of Paris is, perhaps, the one emotion which the sub-continent shares with the United States. North and South America are both of the same mind in rushing off the boat at Cherbourg ; and little cliques of novelists from Maine sit at the next table in a Paris café to literary exiles from Nicaragua and Peru. It is a shade surprising to find the children of the South in such full agreement with Franklin's intimation that every man has two countries—his own and France. But the fact is quite undoubted, and in view of the extremely meagre ties which bind France to South America, it is a rare tribute to the efforts of French penetration, to the persistence with which France polishes her uncommercial links with the New World. There is no evidence that grateful audiences place orders for French woollens after a lecture on Molière. But national prestige is powerfully aided by such stimulants, and it cannot be doubted that they lead to something more than tourist traffic. It is significant, I think, that in a recent year the admirable

## ARGENTINE TANGO

library of the Faculty of Medicine at Buenos Aires issued for use a total of 27,980 volumes, of which 13,716 were French and 53 English. Without making exaggerated claims on behalf of British medicine, it may be asserted that this proportion shows some disparity ; and I have no doubt that it is reflected with equal clarity in French exports of instruments and drugs. That is one small instance of the practical value of intellectual prestige, of the advantages which come deservedly to an enterprising nation that never hesitates to *porter haut le drapeau de la France*. There is a lesson in it ; but this is not the place for lessons, and I leave the matter there.

*TIJERAS*



## CLIO SUDAMERICANA

THERE cannot be a more breath-taking experience for any reader than to discover a whole continent whose history is new to him. We have all grown slightly jaded among the familiar landmarks of the European past—the Stone Age settlement, the first Roman colony (with photographs of half a circus and a coin), the harsh Latin nomenclature of its provincial days fading into the Middle Ages ; the reign of faith (with photographs of a cathedral)—of several faiths, with tedious particulars of an interminable civil war ; the Age of Learning, national expansion (with maps of undulating frontiers), the grave decorum of the Eighteenth Century sharply interrupted by the Revolution, by several revolutions ; the arrival of machinery accompanied by more revolutions, the Great War, and the present situation. That, with local variations, is an inventory of the past of any

## ARGENTINE TANGO

European state ; and the features of the Asiatic scene are almost as familiar—the early kingdoms, Alexander's problematic route, a slight intrusion of the Romans, several destructive conquests from somewhere further down the line, the coming of Islam, a blurred succession of dynasties that swallowed one another like boa constrictors between frontiers that pulled in and out like concertinas, culminating in the latest age ennobled by the compulsory adoption of typewriters and bowler-hats. North America is quite as hackneyed, with its discovery, first settlements, emancipation in a series of defeats inflicted on base mercenaries by righteously indignant colonists, early struggles, the unfolding of the West (with photographs of locomotives wearing cowcatchers like crinolines and the State Capitol at Omaha, Nebraska), unlimited expansion, the World War, more expansion, and then a sudden hitch. We knew it all before ; and just as we feel that history has no surprises left for us, we stumble on the glorious discovery of South America.

For here is a vast region of the world of which

## TIJERAS

our knowledge, apart from a vague notion that it once belonged to Spain, is an almost total blank. The fact is nothing to be proud of, since a working knowledge of its history is likely to be of far more value in the next hundred years than a list of the Omayyad Caliphs or even a close acquaintance with the Second Punic War. But what a pleasure to alight upon a tract of history where nothing is familiar. For the efforts of ten thousand novelists have not yet dimmed the romance of the early years, of the first Spaniards peering uncertainly between the trees at the smoke of strange sacrifices, of the ample lives of Spanish Viceroy's between their palaces among the flowers and the incense of dim cathedrals in the shadow of vast mountain-sides. At that stage South America is, perhaps, vaguely comprehensible in European terms ; but the most surprising revelation is of its more recent history, of that region where we expect to find ourselves most at home and are most thoroughly at sea. For we must learn the long vicissitudes of an interminable War of Liberation that swayed up and down the continent, of men roaring songs of freedom as they

## ARGENTINE TANGO

whirled the *bolas* round their heads and lancers charging wildly round the stolid infantry of Spain, of little armies winding through the passes of stupendous mountain-ranges, of Liberators clasping hands in Roman attitudes caught by a thousand sculptors to lend dignity to a thousand squares. The whole mythology is unfamiliar. In the heroic legend of South America we are among strange gods ; and the delicious air of novelty continues to pervade the whole succeeding century. For we must learn a full gamut of new names, to count the blessings of the Treaty of Ancón, to look back at the golden age of Bartolomé Mitre, to thrill with the heroes of Yatay and Humaitá, to uncover as we recall the crowning mercy of Caseros. It is singularly refreshing to breathe the new air of a scene where every landmark is quite unfamiliar ; and there is nothing to be said for the supercilious Frenchman who, confronted with a national hero in Buenos Aires, murmured helplessly, “*La bataille de Santa-Rosa . . . Qu'est-ce qu'on peut dire à un général qui a gagné la bataille de Santa-Rosa ?*” The same, one might reply, as anyone would say to a

## TIJERAS

soldier who had won Austerlitz or Gravelotte or the Marne or any of the names familiar to the devotees of European legend. But the delight of an excursion into South American history is its almost total novelty, the rich profusion of unaccustomed names undimmed by any connotation of class-room tedium. Bring me my list of Chilian Presidents. Or hear me, if you will, the battles of the Paraguayan War. A miracle has happened: for the first time since leaving school I am prepared to learn something.

## CINCINNATUS IN HAMPSHIRE

THE house stood by the river, and the river wound through the green English country. The tall columns of a Grecian portico lent it a stately air, and it surveyed the pleasant scene from all its windows. So did the two old gentlemen pacing slowly up and down in front of it. The shining reaches of the river and the big trees in the park composed an admirable picture. Visitors to Broadlands were frequently constrained to assure their hostess that they had seen nothing lovelier ; and if they did not, Lord Palmerston would say it for them. For the Prime Minister took pride in his possessions ; there were more pheasants in his woods than elsewhere ; his race-horses were unequalled, although they rarely ran except at country meetings ; and he surveyed his view, as he paced up and down beside his guest. Lord Palmerston was ageing now ; but though the

## TIJERAS

buttoned figure occasionally slept beneath a tilted hat in Parliament, his eye was always bright at Broadlands. Even his billiards improved upon the Broadlands table, where he invariably made a point of winning if Lady Palmerston was looking on ; and the unnatural bloom upon his whiskers seemed to deepen in the country air. His step was always springy ; but the old gentleman beside him had no difficulty in keeping pace. For his visitor was singularly active too, a country neighbour from Southampton who farmed a few acres and awed his labourers by an impressive habit of saddling his own horse and leaping straight into the saddle. A strange old gentleman, he would spend hours of silence in the woods ; and after a long day of farm-work he often slept under the sky. But sometimes he would lie waiting for the dawn in his small bedroom. The little room was piled with papers ; there were trunks and cupboards full of them, all packed with memories for the still figure on the bed, who lay waiting for the dawn through the long silence of a winter night and seemed to hear the watchmen call

## ARGENTINE TANGO

the hours, as he had heard them long ago in Buenos Aires—

*¡ Viva la Confederacion Argentina !*

*¡ Mueran los salvajes asquerosos unitarios !*

*¡ Muera el loco traidor, salvaje unitario Urquiza !*

But the mad traitor Urquiza had disobeyed his orders. For he had not died and, more treacherous than ever, marched an army to Caseros, fought a battle, and marched on Buenos Aires, where more traitors let their President slip through the dark streets at midnight with a little escort of armed British sailors ; the oars dipped in the black waters of the harbour, as a boat stole out to the waiting cruiser ; a ship dropped down the River Plate ; and through the long nights of exile the Dictator Rosas waited for the dawn in Hampshire.

That was in 1852. He had reigned in savage omnipotence for twenty years. His cold cruelty became a system of government, a successful challenge of the laws of God and man. Foreign governments learned to respect the icy tyranny of Buenos Aires ; and in the Argentine men

## TIJERAS

looked behind them when his name was spoken with anything but abject praise. For death waited on his word ; the killing mounted to a wild crescendo ; and men could still remember how Camila O'Gorman died. There had been no other will than his, except when Manuelita managed to contrive a pardon with a daughter's cunning and all Buenos Aires sang :

“ *En el Prado de Palermo  
hay esbelta y olorosa,  
entre nardos una rosa,  
y es de carmín su color.* ”

“ *Cantad, argentinos  
el día dichoso,  
natal venturoso  
de un ángel de Luz.* ”

“ *Viva, viva Manuelita,  
rosa que mayo nos dió . . .* ”

She came to see him sometimes now ; for she lived in London with her husband. But he was generally alone with his memories on the little farm outside Southampton. At first he had visited a little and gone to race-meetings and

## ARGENTINE TANGO

impressed the neighbours with his horsemanship. He was quite used to Englishmen ; a young man named Darwin had once come to see him in the field, when he was campaigning in the south against the Indians, and had been much impressed with his gravity. Now he was grave enough, as he rode silently round the little English farm—his '*pobros ranchos*.' The cottage, where the old man housed his decent poverty, had quite an air of Argentina among the trees of its plantation ; and the lonely figure in the big *gaucho* spurs, with lasso and *bolas* at the saddlebow, had strayed into Hampshire from the Pampa. He did not speak much, though he was always working on the farm or at his endless papers ; and sometimes there was a mail from home with letters from his children, or he sent them out a little money and a few handkerchiefs. For Rosas left his country with his hands clean of everything but blood. The friendly face of Palmerston was one of his rare visitors, and they met with some regularity. For Lord Palmerston could feel for any one who had fallen from power ; and Rosas made him his executor. But that was

## TIJERAS

one more disappointment, since the kind neighbour at Broadlands died first, and Rosas lived on with the echoes ringing in his ears. The years went by, until he died in 1877 after living, if it could be called life, a Hampshire farmer for a quarter of a century.

## MAD HATTER'S WAR

I CANNOT vouch for it ; but as I found it in a printed book with admirable maps and portraits of ex-Presidents in large moustaches and striking uniforms or evening dress and beards of individual cut, I subjoin the anecdote with all due reserve.

The story opens in a mild domestic atmosphere at Pernambuco in 1861. It is not easy to believe that anything unusual could happen in the year that the Prince Consort died, when *Tannhäuser* was hissed in Paris and Earl Russell wrote interminable despatches about Italian unity ; but if anything unusual was in the wind, Pernambuco was just the place for it. A young married man lived there in a state of limited felicity with his mother and his wife. Practically everyone, that is to say, was loved by someone ; the son loved his mother, the husband loved his

## TIJERAS

wife, and the mother loved her son. The one thing missing from this triangle of affections was any love between the mother-in-law and her son's wife. But the old lady found a lively substitute for it in jealousy, which took the pleasing form of making mischief. For she informed her son that if he went down the garden after dark and lurked among the bushes, he would see his wife meet a strange gentleman. She also intimated to the wife that there was something to be seen at the same time and place. After these agreeable preliminaries the spirited old lady withdrew to make her toilet, emerging a little after dark as the strange gentleman. The younger generation was no less punctual at the rendezvous, a watchful husband in the bushes and his wife at some less inconspicuous point. Faithful to her predictions, the old lady put in an appearance in her novel character of male impersonator. But it is not recorded whether the wife suffered the supreme disappointment of encountering her mother-in-law in trousers, since at this point her husband, taking careful aim, brought off a highly creditable right and

## ARGENTINE TANGO

left, leaving himself an orphan and a widower. His prompt confession enabled the police to detect the guilty party, and the impulsive orphan was sentenced to an ample term of imprisonment. He only served a year ; and after his release the unfortunate young man devoted his remaining days to missionary work in the interior with still more devastating consequences.

Purveying a mild form of higher thought, he founded settlements and chapels for the next thirty years ; and shortly before Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee an untoward event occurred. For a local magistrate, who had removed one of the more attractive damsels from a settlement of his converts, was pardonably startled by the appearance of a few of her relations in his immediate vicinity. Nothing, indeed, was further from their thoughts than to retrieve their erring sister, since they were merely in search of suitable building material. But her master's error was excusable ; and since he was a magistrate, he ordered the police to move them on. They failed to do so ; and a reinforcement of two hundred gendarmes from Bahia was no more

## TIJERAS

successful, since the wayfarers were conscious of their perfect innocence and knew of no reason why they should move on. Apprised of these events, the Federal authorities sent a major and some troops to storm the settlement ; but the devotees of higher thought repulsed it with fifty casualties. Things were warming up ; and fifteen hundred men with field-guns and a colonel moved up-country. But after a surprise attack, in which they lost the colonel, all their guns, and a good deal of ammunition, they moved quickly down again. The news of this reverse caused crowds to sack newspaper offices at Rio, alleging that the whole affair looked very like a royalist intrigue ; someone was irrelevantly murdered at a railway station ; and the Government resolved to take strong measures. Ten thousand men under a galaxy of generals were concentrated in the neighbourhood. The devotees of higher thought, who had become progressively less mild-eyed as the war went on, put up a spirited defence, thanks to the guns and ammunition left behind by previous attacks. There was an engagement at a place pleasingly

## ARGENTINE TANGO

named Cocorobó ; and the punitive expedition was reinforced by the arrival of three thousand men and a siege-train. The Minister of War himself took charge ; the settlement, after an unsuccessful storm, was besieged *en règle* ; and when it ultimately fell after a savage escalade, practically all the sect, including their impulsive founder, perished in the ruins. Such are the dangers which attend the propagation of higher thought by citizens of Pernambuco guilty of carelessness with fire-arms.

## THE GOVERNMENT FALLS . . .

**T**HERE is no use in denying it. The produce of the continent is rich and varied, spouting from elevators into grain ships moored along the Paraná, or slung from frigoríficos into the freezing holds of steamers where icicles hang in the gloom though deck-hands are perspiring overhead, or crated and boxed for Covent Garden, or shot from lorries through a manhole in the road to emerge fifty yards away on moving bands, where coffee-bags slide solemnly along the waterfront at Santos. But of all its products South America is chiefly known to the ill-informed of other continents by the South American revolution. Those spirited events, which serve so well to fill a column in a newspaper, have engaged the world's fancy ; and it is a little apt to think of street-fighting as the chief local pastime. By the simple expedient of never looking at a map it remains comfortably under the impression

## ARGENTINE TANGO

that traffic in the streets of Buenos Aires is gravely dislocated by a riot in Guatemala, which is not unlike a fond belief that an affray somewhere on the Persian Gulf disturbs the sleep of Edinburgh. Indeed, it can rarely master the distinction between Central and South America, or the essential fact that the Great Powers of the south differ in degree, kind, climate, population, and habits from the sultry atmosphere of a small fruit-republic on the Caribbean with a reputation chiefly confined to stamp-collectors and a population of ex-Presidents and United States Marines. Few citizens of London would feel complimented if visitors from Buenos Aires took extravagant precautions before a walk down Oxford Street, because they had heard so much about disorder in the Balkans. Yet that is the blunder made by many Europeans about South America. For they stare hopefully about them through romantic spectacles constructed by the late O. Henry ; and nothing would surprise them less, as they sit comfortably in large cafés on lighted boulevards to watch the trams go by, than to receive a replica of the immortal tele-

## TIJERAS

gram once handed to “ a banana king, a rubber prince, a sarsaparilla, indigo, and mahogany baron ” in *Cabbages and Kings* :

“ His Nibs skedaddled yesterday per jack-rabbit line with all the coin in the kitty and the bundle of muslin he’s spoony about. The boodle is six figures short. Our crowd in good shape, but we need the spondulicks. You collar it. The main guy and the dry goods are headed for the briny.”

Such communications, it may be said with confidence, are extremely rare south of the Equator, though they are not unknown three thousand miles away. But there is often trouble in the Balkans while the omnibuses are running regularly to the Bank.

Not that revolution is wholly unknown in the more powerful and settled communities of South America. The application of armed violence to politics is an inheritance, it would appear, from Spain. Someone remarked in Buenos Aires that the sub-continent had been largely populated by Spanish younger sons, by spirited cadets, that is to say, who found life in a new country preferable

## ARGENTINE TANGO

to the less eventful calendar of life at home. But there is very little evidence that their elder brothers, who remained in Spain, were wholly immune from sudden impulses of a destructive character. For the Nineteenth Century in Spain and the Twentieth in Portugal were punctuated by every variety of revolution, riot, and *pronunciamiento*. Under Queen Isabella most generals in the Spanish army had been Prime Minister or exiled to the Canary Islands or besieged in Barcelona or all three at the same time ; and the same spirit crossed the Atlantic with their young relations. This tendency was aggravated by an unfortunate taste for written constitutions. It was one thing to draft an eloquent adaptation of the Constitution of the United States or to obtain one ready-made (as was so often done) from the encyclopædic Mr. Bentham. But it was quite another when a spirited Opposition found itself debarred from office by the rigid terms of some immovable enactment. In such circumstances there is very little to be done except to seize the Post Office, arrest the President, shoot a few troublesome policemen, censor telegrams,

## TIJERAS

and tell the world that there has been a change of Government. For such slight irregularities are rendered almost inevitable by the attempt to confine high spirits within the narrow limits of a written constitution. Besides, the evident reluctance of most local politicians to leave office in the absence of compulsion seems to render some form of pressure almost indispensable. The same emotion, which is not unknown to the same breasts in other countries, is more rigorously controlled elsewhere ; for we know that we can change our masters by a simple act on polling-day. But if one felt that the Prime Minister was irremovable except by force, who can say how many unexpected customers the gunsmiths would get ? That is one particular in which the Old World can still teach a modest lesson to the New.

Yet there is often more display than malice in the apparent violence, since the customary insurrection, followed by the usual march on the capital, aeroplanes dropping manifestoes, and troops fraternising with the mob, may be the only means of demonstrating that the winning side

## ARGENTINE TANGO

possesses a majority. I do not minimise the gravity and inconvenience of the method ; but there is sometimes an atmosphere about the better kind of revolution that almost suggests a sporting fixture. Did not a friend of mine in Buenos Aires once begin an anecdote with the immortal opening : “ As we were driving to the revolution . . . ” ?

1870

THE dark young man from Paraguay stared at the show-cases in an alley of the Palais de l'Industrie. It was the year 1855 ; and a judicious Emperor had provided the mild distractions of a Paris Exhibition in case his subjects were inclined to let their vivid fancy dwell upon the rather stationary operations in the freezing trenches outside Sebastopol. The visitor, considering that he was barely twenty-nine, was rather stout. He stared at the exhibits and occasionally said something to his party in a low voice. They did their best to catch what he was saying, because he was Minister Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Paraguay to the Courts of Great Britain and France. His father, who had made the appointment, was President of the Republic ; and the old man's family affections were laudably displayed in the further circumstance that, of his two remaining sons, the elder was commandant

## ARGENTINE TANGO

of the capital and the younger had thrown up a dignified appointment as Admiral of the Fleet in order to see the world, while the ladies of his family conducted an exchange at which their fellow-citizens were privileged to sell torn paper-money at a modest discount (subsequently transferred to the Treasury at par) or to obtain loans on the security of jewellery, which the lenders were a little apt to retain indefinitely, if it took their fancy. The stout young man, it will be seen, had formidable connections ; for Lopez reigned in Paraguay with the same unchallenged rule as the Dictator Francia. The visitor spoke admirable French and was greatly impressed by what he saw in Paris. There was so much to see ; but of all the sights that he had seen there were two spectacles that really haunted him—the trim, wasp-waisted officers in their smart *képis*, and a tall lady named Eloisa Lynch. Both, he felt, might with advantage be introduced to Paraguay. As he happened to combine the appointment of Minister of War with his diplomatic post, there would not be much difficulty about the former ; and the latter was almost as easy,

## TIJERAS

since the lady proved most reasonable in spite of being married to a French army surgeon who was still alive. An Irishwoman born in France, she was slightly affected by the prevailing Napoleonic cult. She might even make the dark young man beside her the Napoleon of the New World ; and if she could, the Pope might grant a dispensation and let her divorce her army surgeon and marry Lopez. Then, perhaps, she would be an empress instead of Madame Lynch.

The strange couple sailed for Paraguay ; and the Napoleonic dream drummed in his dark head. The years went by ; the old Dictator died ; and a National Assembly with remarkable unanimity appointed his son *Gefe Supremo y General de los Ejércitos de la República del Paraguay*. That was in 1862. His moment had arrived, and he prepared to be Napoleonic. The chief essential was a war ; and he provided one upon a princely scale. Indeed, he slightly overdid it, since he went to war with Brazil, Uruguay, and Argentina at the same time. This was a shade excessive, as Paraguay was a small country, and the enemy comprised almost the whole of South America.

## ARGENTINE TANGO

But the uncertain frontiers of the interior were rich in *casus belli* ; and if one was to be Napoleonic, one must not be afraid of risks. Besides, his officers all sported *képis* now, his infantry wore something vaguely reminiscent of the Imperial Guard upon their heads, and at a distance the cavalry of the escort in their brass helmets with the dangling horse-tails might pass for French dragoons. This was highly gratifying, although the greater part of his artillery had served as ballast in sea-going ships and would be more at home as posts at street-corners ; but when Lopez reflected that the sailors of his river-flotilla wore an approximation to French uniforms, he could have little doubt of the result.

Neither, it may be added, could the Allies, since the combined resources of Argentina and Brazil (to say nothing of Uruguay) were more than adequate for the suppression of a small up-country state. The only difficulty was in bringing them to bear ; for nature had installed Paraguay on the upper waters of a river and behind an impenetrable belt of swamp and forest. In the ensuing operations there was a striking lack of

## TIJERAS

strategy ; even Napoleon, one feels, could scarcely have manœuvred with his accustomed brilliance over that obstructed ground. But luck, Paraguayan gallantry, and the blind forces of geography protracted them for years. For years the Allies stumbled blindly along forest paths, gun-boats stole warily along the river beneath overhanging trees, and Paraguayans yelled insults at Brazilians from entrenched positions. Generals were superseded with gratifying frequency ; guns burst as often as their shells ; and the derisive Paraguayans shot with bows and arrows at their exasperated foes. The endless war began in 1865 ; it was still flickering in 1869, although the Paraguayans were using women for their transport now. But Lopez in his *képi* and his scarlet *poncho* still talked in his low voice and dined with Madame Lynch and the Bishop, who played draughts with him all day. Now there was not much left about the war that any connoisseur could recognise as notably Napoleonic. But the Paraguayans knew how to die as well as Frenchmen ; and (like his great original) their obliging master let them. For Paraguay, which had

## ARGENTINE TANGO

begun the war with a population of over a million and a quarter, emerged with a quarter of a million, of whom barely 30,000 were males. Lopez had destroyed a million souls, not counting any of his enemies : did the Emperor himself do better ?

As the war flickered out, the scarlet *poncho* flitted north with Madame Lynch and his children. There was a scuffle in a swamp ; and a charging lancer left Lopez in the mud, while Madame Lynch dashed wildly off in a bolting carriage. Their eldest boy shot a Brazilian and was killed beside her. There was nothing more for her to do ; now she would never be an empress ; and there was no need for a divorce, since Lopez lay dead in the swamp behind her. Their dream was over, and she went back to Paris. It was the year 1870 when his adventure ended : Napoleonic schemes were apt to end that year. So he was true to type, although it was the wrong Napoleon. Perhaps he had not thought of that.

*RUEDA*



## FAMILY COACH

AT first sight I did not believe it. It is a sound rule for travellers to disbelieve the greater part of what they hear and nearly all they see ; and although it was plainly visible from where I sat, my better judgment told me that it was not there. For we were in a moving train, and it was clear beyond argument that there could not be a clock upon the mantelpiece. Indeed, if I knew anything of trains, there was no mantelpiece for it to stand on. For mantelpieces imply grates, and grates connote coal fires, and nobody needs to be told that there is only one coal fire in any properly conducted train, and that is in the engine. But the odd thing about it was that, when I looked again, it was still there. For there was undeniably a clock on that extraordinary mantelpiece ; and, what is more, it seemed to realise that it was in a moving train, since it was screwed in place. There was a grate

## ARGENTINE TANGO

as well with a fire burning pleasantly behind its bars ; and as the evening was a little cool, we sat comfortably poking the fire, as the train rolled across the Argentine.

I think if anything was needed to convince me that it was no ordinary country, that astounding fireplace in the parlour-car supplied the proof. Not that the wonders of the train ended there. It might be a new experience to sit at ease in large upholstered chairs and poke the fire, as stations with names like Duggan and Pacheco and Kilometre 62 flowed past the curtained windows. But the marvels of our travelling apartment were not fully revealed until we went to bed and found a writing-table for the master and a large wardrobe for his *Señora*, the whole richly supplemented by an ample bath-room with such a galaxy of taps as would have gratified the late Arnold Bennett and water that was steaming hot at dawn. There can be no experience that fills simple Europeans with a sense of greater ease than to sit boiling gently in a morning bath and hear the engine panting on its unending way across the plains ahead of them.

## RUEDA

Sit, do I say ? Amalekites of more than human size might have reclined without undue precautions in that miraculous bath. Such glimpses give one a new standard of railway comfort, and I resolved to startle Enquiry Offices at British termini by first obtaining times of trains and then asking carefully after their plumbing. For the morning bath on board a moving train strikes me as the very crown of civilised luxury.

But let it not be thought that these splendours are the common destiny. For they represent the very summit of privilege, the best that a great Company can do for wealthy *estancieros* on their annual migration with wife and seven daughters from the plains to Buenos Aires for the winter season. In the present case they were the height of hospitality shown for no reason in the world that we could think of to guests, who were regarded by a pleasant fiction as persons of importance. So we stood gravely on the platform beside the gleaming splendours of the 'family coach,' impersonating as best we could the wealthy *estanciero* and his seven daughters who

## ARGENTINE TANGO

should have been its occupants ; and there were even instances when a hospitable Company, noting our deficiencies in this respect, assisted the impersonation by supplying the daughters. For that reason, perhaps, those journeys have, in my grateful memory, an ineradicable air of musical comedy. Was it the chorus artfully combined of young gentlemen and ladies ? Or was it that forgotten touch of Mr. Daly's magic which used to transfer all the characters quite effortlessly to the most distant places of the earth, where they all met up again without the least surprise ? That was it, I think ; and those cheerful dinners (at which the railway company displayed a knowledge of old brandy unusual among railway companies in less enlightened countries) formed the gay transition from Act I, *The Winter Garden of the Hotel Splendide*, to Act II, where everybody was to reassemble on *The Prairie*.

But a more aged fancy was continuously engaged by the massive comfort of the whole proceeding ; and one traveller at least was given notions far beyond his station as a traveller.

## RUEDA

Will he ever consent to travel by a common train after the regal luxury of driving with his hosts across the darkness of the Pampa to a little junction, where a coach—his private coach—was waiting in a siding? Nodding easily to the attendant, he ordered a round of sherry; and trying to behave as if such things were normal in his life, he entertained the party in his lit saloon, as they sat waiting for the night express to which it was to be attached. Was that the crest of his imperial magnificence? Or was it rather the next morning, when they woke to find themselves in the big terminus at Buenos Aires, moored in majestic solitude beside a platform? After the bath, they murmured that they would be taking breakfast and hinted that the station restaurant was where this ceremony might be performed. But their ministering angel, deeply scandalised by the vulgarity of such a thought, waved them back to the saloon and ordered them to wait; and presently that authoritative man appeared, bearing enormous trays and followed by a second cup-bearer. They were to breakfast in their private coach; and, obedient to his benevolent

## ARGENTINE TANGO

commands, an awe-struck couple breakfasted in state behind their plate-glass windows, watched by half Buenos Aires as the morning trains came in. Did Nero ever taste more luxury than that ? But then he never went to Argentina.

## THE DOCTOR'S DILEMMA

IT was a predicament in which anyone might find himself—anyone, that is to say, whose university career had followed a fairly normal course. My own, conducted upon customary lines, had been crowned some years before by the modest glories of a Bachelor's degree. But, an unexpected legacy supervening shortly afterwards, some freak of fancy prompted me to supplement this dignity. For it had been a shade distasteful to share my academic status with those unnumbered Bachelors of Arts who flaunt their names on notice-boards outside forbidding edifices dedicated to public worship in the outskirts of provincial towns. There were so many Bachelors of Arts, it seemed, and nearly all of them would preach on Sunday. So in my pride I thought that I would go one better and become a Master. It was a mild, but legitimate, ambition ; a modest outlay and a smart blow on the

## ARGENTINE TANGO

head from the Vice-Chancellor would make it mine ; and I proceeded, as the saying is, to a Master's degree. That was, for me, the summit. There were no other heights for any ordinary man to scale ; I was disinclined to send an International Postal Order to a correspondence college in the Middle West with a request for its Ph.D. Doctorates, indeed, seemed a superfluous adornment, since they were mostly of Divinity and I was not a headmaster. So I resolved to face the world with modest confidence as a Master of Arts.

For years that dignity seemed to suffice. I rather liked to feel that I could wear a scarlet hood, if only I had got one ; and there was a quiet satisfaction in the biennial exercise of a University (and plural) vote on behalf of a Parliamentary candidate who was invariably beaten. But my complacency was gravely shaken when I got to Buenos Aires. For I had hitherto believed that I was (academically) as good as any man ; and the awakening was rude indeed, when I discovered in that learned city that I was dirt beneath the feet of practically all

## RUEDA

the passers-by. I had not landed in the place above eighteen hours before it was borne in upon my shrinking sense that it was almost wholly populated by my academic betters. I met a host of charming people, and every one of them was the proud wearer of a Doctor's degree. Doctors arrived in shoals at my hotel ; I dined with Doctors ; Doctors took me out to lunch ; the streets were full of Doctors hurrying to keep appointments with other Doctors in taxicabs driven by more Doctors. No, that was (I felt) the one exception. For everybody in Buenos Aires seemed to be a Doctor except me and the taxi-drivers.

It was a painful situation. How was I to lecture with a faint show of assurance to long rows of my superiors ? Talma performing at Erfurt to his *parterre de rois* was nothing to it. But I had reckoned without the perfection of Argentine chivalry. For the whole world combined in one benevolent conspiracy to hide my shame. Since it was quite inconceivable that any person of my evident pretensions should lack his proper title, I became, by courtesy, a Doctor too. The

## ARGENTINE TANGO

newspapers began it, since the first press photograph that showed me speaking from a sheet of Spanish manuscript gripped tightly in a nervous hand was tactfully subscribed : ‘*El Dr. P. Guedola hablando.*’ After that, it went like wild-fire ; and I felt almost slighted when any newspaper omitted my stolen degree. (To do them justice, they very rarely did ; and when they did, they made ample reparation, as in the gracious instance of that provincial journal which, omitting the doctorate, adorned me with the splendid name of *Phillibert*). Nor was the courtesy confined to print, since I grew shameless under frequent introduction by the title of Doctor. It would have been indelicate to repudiate the honour. Indeed, I almost think that it was mine by right for the duration of my visit ; for I was once addressed as Doctor by the President himself. Can it be doubted that a President, who governed by virtue of his military authority and without the obstruction of a Parliament, was empowered to confer doctorates by nomination ? At any rate, I like to think so and to dream that I was once a Doctor in Argentina.

## RUEDA

But I was sometimes more than that. For such courtesy as I encountered does not stop short at a mere doctorate ; and I was frequently presented to the world as a Professor. No one was harsh enough to ask what I professed ; but the perfect chivalry of this community of Doctors impelled them to adorn their guest with an academic dignity superior to their own. Bare equality would have been quite enough for me ; but hospitality in Argentina does not do things by halves, and I became a courtesy Professor. This was almost too much. An honest man, I felt, might possibly have overlooked a bogus doctorate ; but would he not repudiate a Chair to which he had no title ? I lacked the courage ; and I can only hope that friends in Buenos Aires will accept this tardy confession as the best amends that I can make. But whilst it lasted, the unaccustomed dignity had rare charms for the pretender ; and I tasted all the dizzy emotions of those courageous men who cash substantial cheques in the style of 'Lord Ian Foljambe,' which invariably inspires confidence in the romantic breasts of cashiers at seaside hotels.

## ARGENTINE TANGO

It was such a thrill to see myself in print as a Professor ; and it was sublime, when the attendant on the train enquired solicitously whether the *Señor Profesor* would take anything before retiring to his private coach. Take anything, indeed. Was it not enough that he had taken precedence over a whole race of Doctors ? Someone had told me that honorary degrees were unusual in Argentina. That has not been my experience ; for dignities were showered on my shrinking head. But that has always been the happy fate of Englishmen abroad. Did not the Continent a century ago invariably ennable the travelling Englishman as 'Milord' ? Manners change with the spread of education ; and now they merely call him 'Doctor.'

## GREAT OPEN SPACES

THE view that I remember best was from the window on the landing. The light came flooding in ; and as the visitor stopped on his way downstairs to see what was outside, he looked out and saw the Pampa. Or, to be quite exact, he saw nothing in the wide world. For the world, as he could see, was very wide indeed ; and it consisted principally of light. At first there was nothing more for him to see than a still universe of light extending to infinity in the morning sunshine ; and he stood looking at it from the landing window. But as he looked, the light resolved itself into a sort of landscape ; shapes were gradually defined upon it ; and there were slight differentiations of colour. For he was looking out over the rich green of a garden in the foreground, across a wide perspective of moving cattle vaguely outlined on the paler green of the middle distance, into a vista without

## ARGENTINE TANGO

end where the level green stretched endlessly away until it met the sky and faded into blue. The Pampa is a one-colour landscape ; but though it may be painted from a modest palette, the variations of its green are infinite, from the deep tones of the foreground to the faint whisper of its dying green that meets the sky twenty miles away. But each of them is plainly visible, since nothing intervenes between the watcher and the distant skyline. There are no features ; nothing rises up to cast a shadow or to break the long perspective. For the landscape has only two dimensions ; and the Pampa spreads its endless monochrome of green without a single vertical to interrupt it.

The world has other spaces ; but I know of none that are so level. The prairies undulate across the plains of North America ; the Sahara is a dry wilderness of dead river-valleys and sand mountains ; and cartographers portray the desiccated features of Arabia on crowded maps. But one could hardly map the Pampa, where there is nothing to record. Its level surface is unbroken except by things that men have made

## RUEDA

—farm-buildings, wire fences, a rare group of trees, and the undeviating railway track ruled across its endless distances. It has no secrets, since there are no folds in it where anything could be concealed ; and it is a little startling, after driving home twenty miles at night, to look back from your doorstep and see the lights of the small town, from which you started a good hour before, twinkling twenty miles away across the night. But distance plays strange tricks with eyesight on the Pampa, where nothing is as near as it appears to be by a margin of ten miles or so, and one soon learns to view a freight-train puffing comfortably on the sky as a homely spectacle.

There are no other sights to see. As you ride out into the Pampa, the house is left behind among its trees. The track runs out before you into the never-ending green ; and as you navigate the immensity, the level green stretches away to meet the sky on every side. In the clear light a stack six miles away stands up as though it were five hundred yards off, and a distant mirage flickers on the sky. There is nothing else to see

## ARGENTINE TANGO

as you pound steadily along ; and there is nothing there to hear except the soft beat of hoofs on the green earth. The horses go at a slow gallop. It never checks and never varies, as you ride at that unchanging pace across the green ocean of the Pampa within the unvaried circle of the horizon. There is no sound except the hoofs ; and when they halt, there is no sound at all. The silence of the Pampa is complete ; if anything on earth is absolute, I think it is that utter silence of the plains in Argentina. A lamb half a mile away may break it for an instant, or a startled bird gets up under your hoofs and swerves off with a shrill *teru-tero*. But the deep silence closes in, and once again there is no sound under the sky. For though you may see for twenty miles, you cannot hear a sound. That silence is, I think, the most abiding memory of the Pampa. Mile after mile, it spreads its monochrome under the sky in perfect quietness. Cloud shadows drift silently across it. The colours change as the day fades ; the trees in the plantation round the house begin to cast a longer shadow ; voices come from the outhouses, where

## RUEDA

the peons eat their endless meals of beef and maté ; more cattle are still dimly visible moving across the interminable vista ; and as night closes down in silence, you may taste the deep calm of the Pampa.



*EL OCHO*



LONDON,  
*July 1932.*

DEAR —,

It must be more than a year now since we first met at Cambridge that evening after dinner, when I made uneasy conversation and we stared suspiciously at one another, wondering precisely how unbearable eleven weeks of one another's company were going to be. \* , I remember, the never-failing \* , was first to arrive; and his judicious efforts to put me at my ease only deepened my embarrassment. Besides, he never wholly overcame his tendency to call me 'Sir'; and what men of my age suffer from being called 'Sir' by men of yours is something that you will learn one day. At any rate, my memory is still seared by the recollection of that embarrassed evening, when I had nothing for your entertainment but a box of Virginia cigarettes and said the wrong thing about Bolivar.

## ARGENTINE TANGO

Or was it at Oxford? That, you will recall, was a more convivial occasion (I say it without any disrespect to Cambridge), when an open-handed college stood us an enormous lunch and we made despairing efforts to distinguish one another from the other guests, who did not matter in the least, because they were not going to South America in a few weeks. For time was getting short, and we were troubled by tremendous problems as to whether we should need to take riding-boots and morning coats and gowns. (Gowns, I remember, were discarded on the ground that uninitiated Argentines might regard a commoner's gown as a bad joke.)

Then we met again in London on the evening when you all came to dinner and I could no longer Burke the fact that there was a lady coming with us. You bore it, I recall, with commendable fortitude; and I spent the evening looking up and down the table to memorise your faces, because you had to be presented the next morning to another Oxford man at St. James's Palace. But I had not foreseen that I should be instructed at the last moment to present you by name *and*

## EL OCHO

college. It all passed off charmingly ; but I have always been convinced that I invented two new Cambridge colleges. That morning strikes me as the real opening of our adventures. Do you remember the impressive start from home when, fortified with light refreshments and the lady cheering from the balcony, we crowded two Rolls-Royces and told them as casually as we could to drive to the palace ?

From that moment we had started, and invisible crowds somewhere below the Equator seemed to roar 'They're off.' Indeed, they were. Before the week was out, eight of you lined up in tweeds outside a boat-train at Waterloo to smile a last farewell into the waiting cameras. It was too late to turn back now ; Southampton came upon us a few minutes later ; and there was *Arlanza*, looking unnaturally large and waiting to engulf its nervous inmates. Then we were sitting after lunch and watching England fade away behind us ; and I disgraced you all by leaning on the rail at Cherbourg and positively talking to you in a sponge-bag cap and an immense Spanish cloak. (Your feelings were con-

## ARGENTINE TANGO

cealed, but I could see that you were suffering.) We watched the emigrants come off ; we watched the coast of France recede ; and then we made our first appearance at that imperial round table in the very centre of the saloon, which became our pride. At least, I know that it was mine ; for what could be more splendid than to preside with parental dignity over such a family ? Eight ties as black as yours, eight shirts as white would have filled any father with unworthy pride ; and as your temporary parents dressed for dinner, they did their very best to live up to their position. Breakfast was less impressive, because none of us got up at the same time and we breakfasted in twos and threes. There was not much conversation, as \* was never quite awake before eleven, and it was disheartening to watch ¶ indulge his unnatural aptitude for eating paw-paw.

One Sunday morning four of us went plunging down the ladder into a small boat that bounced invitingly upon the waters of Corunna harbour. There was an endless argument between a cripple in the boat and an authoritative person in a

## EL OCHO

bowler-hat as to the proper fare. Bowler-hat was all for three pesetas ; but the cripple contended that the price was five on Sundays. As time was precious, we were strictly neutral and in no way surprised, when we reached the shore, that nobody remembered to collect any fare at all ; for were we not in Spain ? And do you remember how we were driven, in spite of all our protests, to the grave of Sir John Moore, where we did our level best to satisfy the local sense of fitting conduct for English visitors by drooping in becoming attitudes ? Then we were off across the hills to Santiago, saw the sights, lunched heavily, and nearly missed the boat at Vigo. There was more sight-seeing at Lisbon, when we went ashore again and two racing cars dashed up the new road to Cintra bearing Cæsar and his fortunes (all eight of them) with a good deal of fruit and a growing fear that some of you would manage to get left behind in Europe.

But Europe dropped away, and the real voyage began after that morning at Madeira when we all went bathing and ate the largest breakfast ever served by the executors of the late

## ARGENTINE TANGO

Mr. Reid. After that—we nearly missed the boat again, of course—the Western Ocean lay before us, and there was nothing but the long, perfect days when you took far too much exercise and we slept after lunch in rows on deck with a blue copy of Kirkpatrick's *Argentine Republic* open on every knee. For now, as Hakluyt had indicated, it was “ high time for us to weigh our ancre, to hoise up our sailes, to get cleare of these boistrous, frosty, and misty seas, and with all speede to direct our course for the milde, light-some, temperate, and warme Atlantick Ocean, over which the Spaniards and Portugales have made so many pleasant prosperous and golden voyages.” Our voyage out was pretty golden. We knew each other better now ; you did not call me ‘ Sir ’ quite so often excepting \* , of course, in the intervals of his interminable conversations on the rail with our unforgettable fellow-traveller, whose mysterious relation to his lovely charge intrigued us all immensely (particularly, if I remember, ††). But her odd guardian was the chief attraction ; and \* seemed to find it almost irresistible. I can never see a steamer’s rail now

## EL OCHO

without expecting it to be deliciously decorated by the striped seat of \*'s trousers in earnest colloquy with George. And, in face of all denials, I shall always believe that when George roused me from deep sleep one equatorial afternoon to show me a dead bird that he had bought at Pernambuco, he did it for a modest wager. He said it was a present for his wife : I hope she liked it.

When we were fairly in mid-ocean, the ship came to life, which manifested itself in sports and fancy-dress ; and though our record in the sports was poor (our single win, if I remember rightly, was one small event normally reserved for children and old men), I like to think that our collective fancy-dress caused a sensation. The hand of Bakst was heavy on our Bluebeard, as she marshalled her five strapping wives (including \* , a most deleterious *houri*) in portions of her evening dresses which were never quite the same again. But the *clou* of the procession was the white elephant, our pride, stepping impressively in four waste-paper baskets beneath a real *mahout*, whom we had borrowed from his parents.

## ARGENTINE TANGO

Speaking for myself, I found it more convenient (as we were on the Equator) to be a negro slave by wearing practically nothing except permanent-ganate of potash, which departed lingeringly in the course of the next few days.

But South America was drawing nearer. Brazilian ports crept by ; and our Kirkpatricks were plied with a more feverish hand. There was a last excursion ashore at Santos, when we all bathed and lay about and lunched and bathed. But Argentina and duty waited, and we prepared for life on land. At that stage, I think, all of us were quite prepared to live out the remainder of our days at sea ; and we should have received the news that *Arlanza* proposed to steam to China round Cape Horn with perfect calm. But that was not to be ; and one exciting evening we met our hosts in Buenos Aires. We met them rather late at night ; and as the night was late, we drank each other's healths and made little speeches in uncertain Spanish. After which we broke, contrary to expectation, into song. We were not musical, God knows ; but a bad habit of post-prandial song had grown

## EL OCHO

upon us in the ship, and we retained it when we landed. So our startled hosts looked on indulgently while we broke into song. It was a complete surprise to them ; they rather liked it, I suspect ; and the legend of the frigid Briton died on those uncertain harmonies.

Then we were fairly launched on our career in Argentina. Now we did not see nearly so much of one another, meeting in crowds and nodding amiably to each other across the great spaces of public occasions, where somebody made speeches —and it was generally me. How extremely tired you must have got of listening to me making speeches ! True, I assured you that there was not the slightest need for you to attend these melancholy occasions. But there was one exception, when I was sentenced to the ordeal of my first discourse in Spanish before the whole *élite* of Buenos Aires and felt an unbearable need of friendly faces somewhere in the audience. So I resorted to the low artifice of intimating casually that there would be light refreshments at the Plaza after the lecture. That was unworthy,

## ARGENTINE TANGO

because I think you would have come anyhow out of sheer pity. But how good it was to see that formidable audience fringed reassuringly by eight familiar faces ! The crowded days stole by, to say nothing of the still more crowded nights. (You never told me, when I wandered in each morning after nine to talk to you in bed about the day's arrangements and implore somebody to see that ¶ was dressed in time for lunch, how very recently your beds had claimed you.) You dined, you rode, you danced, you read papers on income tax in Spanish to entranced assemblies.

And then eight magnificently variegated dressing-gowns perched all round my sitting-room one morning to draw up the list of guests to be invited to our stupendous cocktail party in the ship the night before we sailed for home. That must have been the first time for weeks that we had all met ; and when we found each other in the observation-car of the International bound for the Andes, it was quite a reunion. We met more frequently towards the end and paraded at full strength, when the last evening came. It

## EL OCHO

came, as you recall, and went ; and when it went, it left behind the grey disillusion of the morning when the ship sailed. Some of you must have found that morning a shade greyer than others ; and most of us expect to live in comfort by blackmailing § , that figure of unutterable woe, through the remaining years of his successful and unblemished career.

The siren went ; the last words were spoken, each according to his station—mine to reporters and yours to young ladies whose tears bedewed the quay ; and *Almanzora* headed slowly down the River Plate. Then we sank back into deck-chairs and repaired our shattered constitutions with profound repose and tonic water. You did not take much exercise on the way home ; there was a lot to talk about ; and most of us, I think, were shadowed by the thought that it would all be over soon. Brazil crept by once more ; the palms of Pernambuco faded into the haze behind us ; and we sat talking in the shade, while ‡ plied an unwearied pen upon the mounting pages of his Journal, that incomparable record, to which this little book of mine is deeply indebted.

## ARGENTINE TANGO

Europe was reaching out for us in the uncomfortable form of wireless bulletins about an imminent Election, to which one of us was doomed. But he received more pleasant news one morning, when the crackling aerial informed him that a book of his had just been published. This was plainly an occasion, since it coincided neatly (if we could wait until after dinner) with our crossing of the Line. So we dined together with some amplitude in combined honour of the Equator and the Duke of Wellington (those diverse types) ; and after dinner someone fumbled with a parcel under the table and fished up a presentation *poncho*, and †† made a little speech, and the most hardened public speaker at the table returned the shortest answer of his whole career, because he could hardly find the voice to thank you in. Then the real business of the evening opened ; for it was plainly fitting to pay due respects to the Equator. An *alibi* party made itself conspicuous under the lights on deck, while picked men proceeded through the gloom of the upper regions to where a solitary cord controlled the ship's siren. That once located,

## EL OCHO

they took the necessary steps ; and *Almanzora*, to her own surprise, roared greetings to the lonely Line. Indeed, all shipping in the neighbourhood learned, if it heard aright, that the stately vessel proposed to go astern.

Unhappily she did not ; and the days went by until we were off Portugal and dined together for the last time at sea. I could not resist printing on our menu the words that Wellington once spoke to a lady, as he watched his officers at play : “ For sixteen years I have always been at the head of our army, and I must have these gay fellows round me.” Our campaign was nearly over now, although you did your best to gild its close with an incomparable *cabaret* performed on deck at some unholy hour before a grateful audience of two. Next morning we were in the Tagus ; the Sud Express was waiting with steam up to hurl your two dejected parents, their travels ended, across Spain into an unappetising wilderness of English politics. But you were at the station with flowers and chocolates—more chocolates than I have ever seen in the same box—and as the train moved out of Lisbon, you woke

## ARGENTINE TANGO

the echoes of the hollow station with a cheer that sent all the memories of all the times that we had had together crowding into the small compartment.





**PRESIDENT'S  
SECRETARIAT**

**LIBRARY**